

## OCTOBER HEALTH EQUITY PARTNER

EACH MONTH, THE CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION & HEALTH PROMOTION HEALTH EQUITY UNIT WILL SPOTLIGHT ONE OF OUR PARTNERS TO SHOWCASE THEIR TREMENDOUS EFFORTS IN HEALTH EQUITY. OUR TEAM THANKS EACH AND EVERY PARTNER AND COMMUNITY BASED-ORGANIZATION FOR ALL OF THEIR EXTRAORDINARY EFFORTS IN ASSISTING NEVADANS AND MAKING AN IMPACT IN PUBLIC HEALTH. THIS MONTH'S FEATURED PARTNER IS THE NEVADA CANCER COALITION.



NEVADA CANCER  
COALITION



NEVADA DIVISION of PUBLIC  
and BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

**NEVADA CANCER COALITION**

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## What is the most exciting project you are currently working on?

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At Nevada Cancer Coalition (NCC), we like to think that every project is exciting because we are making positive change across the state. One particularly great project is our work to reduce breast cancer mortality among Black women. In Nevada, and nationwide, Black women screen for breast cancer at rates similar to white women, however they are much more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage and/or die from the disease. This is a disparity we're working to reduce.

This breast cancer disparities work is multi-faceted. For the past year we've been working with The Larson Institute at the University of Nevada, Reno to develop and execute a survey and series of community conversations to learn more about breast cancer screening knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. From those conversations – which were exclusively with Black women – we learned a lot why they do or don't screen, who they trust with screening messages, and how we can help Black women to find their breast cancers earlier when they're easiest to treat.

Using the information gleaned through this work, NCC is putting together a statewide media campaign, adjusting some of our messaging around breast cancer screening, and working with partners to more effectively educate and support Black women with regards to breast cancer screening.

Another facet of this work goes back more than five years and stems from our Breast Cancer Collaborative. Partners in that group expressed concerns that they were also seeing an increase in later stage diagnoses of breast cancers and cited delayed screening and diagnostics as one challenge. This year, during the 2023

Nevada legislative session, NCC brought forth a bill to eliminate barriers to screening with modalities such as breast MRI or ultrasound, allowing those who are high risk or need secondary screening to receive these services with no cost-sharing.

This is especially vital for Black women who are more likely to be diagnosed with Triple Negative Breast Cancer and Inflammatory Breast Cancer, both of which are most often detected with secondary screening with breast ultrasound and/or breast MRI, as these cancers don't show up as well on standard mammography. The bill passed and will take effect January 1, 2024, for those who are covered by private insurance plans in Nevada.

This breast cancer work involves our entire team in some way and uses a variety of strategies and tactics we believe will move the needle to improve outcomes for Black women in Nevada.



Paint It Pink – Members of NCC's team at the Las Vegas Paint Nevada Pink outreach event October 2, 2022. The event drew together partners to educate the community on breast cancer screening, share resources, and have fun.

## What has been your most memorable moment?

NCC's team has had many memorable moments over the years. Here is one from each of our team members.

“Being invited to present our work on ThriveNV, our cancer survivorship and navigation program, to the Oncology Nursing Society Congress, a national conference. It felt like the culmination of so much work put in over the years by so many people, and to get to present that alongside our executive director Cari to a group of respected peers was an honor.” – Amy Thompson, Cancer Survivorship Programs Manager

“Our trip through Elko and Ely was so memorable -- really seeing the impact on our rural and frontier communities, learning about unique opportunities in those communities. For example, in Elko there's an increased number of 80-year-olds driving themselves to their doctor appointments but no longer have screening covered by Medicare (not a problem in Vegas). We wanted to work with the library in Eureka, but the county doesn't even keep it open most of the week. That was an eye-opening trip that really demonstrated the challenges we have in Nevada.” – Lily Helzer, Prevention Programs Manager

“Darcy and I were in Mesquite at a health fair, and we had a lady named Elena stopped by our table to look at the pig lungs. She pledged to quit smoking that day. I have followed up with her and she is doing well. She says she can feel the changes and is very thankful she came over that day. It was very inspiring.” – Michelle Lambert, Operations Manager

“We hosted a series of focus groups with cancer survivors at several locations throughout the state. Hearing directly and candidly from them what they've experienced through diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship has stuck with me and I can still put myself in those rooms and hear their voices. Often with public health we get caught up in best practices, peer learning, or quantitative data. But I learned more about how cancer truly affects people – and our communities – during those chats than through the rest of the seven years I've been at NCC.” – Kristen Hackbarth, Communications Director



Elko Health & Fitness Fair – NCC's Lily Helzer shares information about the effects of smoking and vaping using a demonstration set of healthy and unhealthy lungs at the annual Elko Health and Fitness Fair February 23, 2023.

“Even though I've only been with NCC for a short time, there have been many memories made. I'm very grateful for our team and the support it provides. Out of many memories, the best would have to be Paint Nevada Pink in October 2022. Gathering NCC team and southern Nevada community partners to come out on a Sunday to share their resources to our low-income community in Las Vegas was very exciting. It was wonderful to see that we all came together as a coalition.” – Valerie Martinez, Southern Nevada Outreach Coordinator

“Each time one of the legislative bills NCC has brought forth or supported gets signed into law is a memorable moment. It's a moment that was built through months – sometimes years – of work by partners who are seeking to create large-scale change for ALL Nevadans. From banning youth from indoor tanning to improving access to treatment and screening, we've made tremendous changes that will have a lasting impact.” – Cari Herington, Executive Director

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## What piece of advice would you give to new partners?

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Building strong partnerships and focusing on collaboration are so important to improving outcomes for Nevadans. No one organization or person can do it alone, but also, why would they want to? Ideas are stronger, more creative, and more do-able when they come from partners working together to identify and solve challenges.

It's not just about sharing work, but sharing ideas and connecting the dots between programs, organizations, and communities to increase impact. This rule applies not only to organizations working together but also to individuals working within the same organization. Working in silos is never going to build the future we all want to see.



SB330 – Members of NCC's team and community advocates at the Nevada Legislature on April 3, 2023 after testifying in support of Senate Bill 330 to increase access to breast cancer screening using technologies such as MRI and ultrasound.

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## What are some tips you can give to Nevadans to help prevent and lower their risk for cancer?

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Just like there are many types of cancer, there are so many ways to prevent cancer or reduce risk.

On a personal level, you can wear sunscreen and practice sun smart behaviors like avoiding peak sun exposure hours, wearing long sleeves and UV-protective clothing and sunglasses, and donning a wide-brimmed hat. Getting plenty of sleep, moving your body regularly – such as walking daily – and eating a well-rounded diet with lots of fruits and vegetables are also great for preventing cancer and other diseases related to obesity such as heart disease. Quitting smoking and other tobacco use and avoiding exposure to secondhand smoke are also important in reducing risk for lung cancer, as is testing your home for radon. And, getting vaccinated for HPV and Hepatitis B can help to prevent cervical and liver cancers.

What we know, however, is that many people don't have access to nutritious foods or opportunities to exercise or enjoy open space and the outdoors. Some people must work in locations that include exposure to secondhand smoke. Communities can help to build equity into access to health environments by working to eliminate food deserts, promoting policies to build and maintain walkable and bikeable neighborhoods with access to open space and parks, and adopting 100% smoke free indoor places.





Pictured on left: Colin-TV Interview – NCC's Cari Herington and Dr. Lynda Hoang were interviewed for the KOLO morning show alongside Colin the Inflatable Colon to promote colorectal cancer screening.

Pictured on right: Robert Lake Elementary – NCC's Valerie and Jorge share sun safety information with students during a Sun Smart Schools presentation February 13, 2023, at Robert Lake Elementary School in Las Vegas. Sun Smart Schools brings sun safety education to many Title I schools in Nevada and emphasizes prevention for skin of all colors.



### Upcoming NCC Events:

September 12, 2023 – Nevada Cancer Control Summit, Carpenters International Training Center, Las Vegas. This one-day event combines learning and continuing education credit with networking opportunities for individuals working in cancer control.

Early bird registration is \$105 and continues through Aug. 28. Learn more at [nevadacancercoalition.org/summit](https://nevadacancercoalition.org/summit)

October 2023 – Paint Nevada Pink, an annual monthlong celebration encouraging people to take a pledge to get screened for breast cancer.

**To see other Partner Spotlights or learn more about the CDPHP Health Equity unit, click [HERE](#).**