

NRCI Insights Newsletter

Northeast Regional Cancer Institute

Get a deeper look at the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute- its board, staff, volunteers, and activities.

Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of CASUAL Day



Helen Phillips

2023 marks the 20th Anniversary of CASUAL Day, NRCI's biggest educational and awareness campaign. Each year focused on the early detection and screening for colorectal cancer. In 2004, siblings Mike Moran and Maura Staback presented the idea of CASUAL Day to NRCI to honor their mother, Helen Phillips, who died from colon cancer. We are grateful for the vision Mike and Maura had 20 years ago and they have stayed

involved in the CASUAL Day campaign over the years. This year, they were the co-chairs for it.

We had a chance to catch up with them to ask some questions about CASUAL Day and what they see for its future.

Q: How did you come up with the concept for CASUAL Day and the acronym?

Mike & Maura: The idea was created to find a different way to bring awareness to colorectal cancer. We came up with casual because we wanted to make talking about colon cancer part of a casual conversation.

Mike: I came up with the acronym in a dream. I wanted to make the word casual mean a casual conversation, but I also wanted casual to stand for something.

Q: What does it mean to celebrate the 20th anniversary of this educational and awareness campaign?

Mike & Maura: It is mind boggling that it's the 20th anniversary of it. We are thrilled at the amazing job NRCI has done with the campaign to spread awareness. Some campaigns fade after a few years, but CASUAL

Day has stayed strong. Unfortunately, many people have been touched by this disease in some way. In recent years, colon cancer rates are up in adults under age 50. For this reason, the American Cancer Society recommends that people at average risk start screening at age 45. This campaign is still relevant.

Q: Did you know the impact CASUAL Day would have on so many people in NEPA?

Mike and Maura: We never imagined it would touch so many people. We love to hear stories about how a family member was screened because of CASUAL Day and how they were able to get polyps removed. We have been thanked for helping to save their lives.

Q: What do you envision for the future of CASUAL Day?

Mike and Maura: We hope that ten years from now we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the campaign and it has grown ever bigger than it is today.

Q: What is your message to other families like yours?

Mike and Maura: We know how difficult colon cancer is for a family but there are wonderful organizations that can help you navigate the murky waters ahead. We relied on our family and those close to us to get through it.

Mike and Maura would like to thank Dr. Harmar Brereton, one of NRCI's founders, as he believed in their dream for this idea. Dr. Brereton introduced them to NRCI and its former president, Bob Durkin. Bob believed a difference could be made by sharing Mike and Maura's mother's story. Mike and Maura's families are grateful for NRCI and call them unsung heroes. CASUAL Day was Thursday, March 30. If you would still like to purchase a t-shirt, call NRCI at (570) 904-8808.

Meet Our New Board Members

We would like to welcome our new Board Members, Maria Montoro Edwards, PhD and Samuel M. Lesko, M.D., M.P.H.

Maria Montoro Edwards, PhD serves as President and CEO of Maternal and Family Health Services (MFHS), a non-profit health and human service organization working to improve the health of Pennsylvania women and children in 17 counties by offering programs that prevent disease, promote wellness, and empower individuals to make healthy choices. Dr. Montoro Edwards has a doctorate in Human Development, is a certified research administrator with a credential in protecting human subjects in research and has a certificate in Executive Leadership for Healthcare Professionals from Cornell University. NRCI has had a steadfast relationship with Maternal and Family Health Services for many years.

The latest addition to the board is no stranger to NRCI, Samuel M. Lesko, M.D., M.P.H. has been affiliated as Medical Director with the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute since 2000. He received his undergraduate degree from Drexel University and his medical degree from Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University, both in Philadelphia. Dr. Lesko completed residency training in Family Medicine at the University of Connecticut and has been certified by the American Board of Family Practice. He has also served as a Senior Staff Fellow with the Food and Drug Administration of the U.S. Public Health Service and has earned a Master's degree in Public Health from Yale School of Medicine. Dr. Lesko has more than 35 years' experience conducting health research. He has held appointments at Boston University School of Public Health, Penn State College of Medicine in Hershey, and Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine.

We are looking forward to working with Maria and Samuel.



Maria Montoro Edwards



Samuel M. Lesko, M.D., M.P.H.



University of Scranton Healthcare Executives Students Support NRCI

Through a relationship with a former intern at the University of Scranton, the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) Higher Education Network, chose NRCI as their benefitting organization for the school year. Students held a donut sale on campus in early December before finals week and raised \$300 to support us. Additionally, on March 30 they hosted their 26th Annual Healthcare Symposium-Bedside and Administration- A Strategic Alliance. The event will feature local speakers in the healthcare industry. They had raffle baskets and proceeds from the baskets will also benefit NRCI.

We are grateful for the opportunity to educate the students about the Cancer Institute and for their support to help us continue our mission to ease the burden of cancer in NEPA.

Mountain View's Girls' Basketball Team Raises \$2,605 for NRCI



From left to right: Coach Bill Simons, Captain Lilly Sedlak, Captain Taylor Neri, Karen Saunders, NRCI President, and Coach Joe Reno.

For the second year in a row, the Mountain View Girls' Basketball Team hosted a fundraiser for the Cancer Institute. In January, the team did a Cotton Candy and Sno Cones sale, sold 50/50, a memory board and tickets for raffle baskets.

Dawn Neri is the organizer of this fundraiser and her daughter is a captain on the team.

About the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute

The Northeast Regional Cancer Institute is a nonprofit community-based agency serving seven counties in northeast Pennsylvania with offices located in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. Focusing on surveillance, community and patient services, and hospital and practice support services, the Cancer Institute invests 100% of its resources locally.

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