

A journey toward renewal: Your impact on cancer survivors

Imagine the rush of emotions that fills a patient when they hear the words, "You are cancer-free." That exhilarating moment is often followed by a daunting question: "What comes next?" For many survivors, the answer lies in our Cancer Survivor Wellness Program, a vital resource that guides them through the next steps of their recovery journey.




The Combat Cancer wellness program is designed to empower survivors, offering health and fitness classes, gym access, and wellness support—all at no cost to participants. This program is not just about physical recovery; it's about helping individuals reclaim control over their health and futures, providing a sense of community and hope.

The impact of your donations to this program is profound. Every contribution directly supports someone in our community—a mother, father, friend, or neighbor—enabling them to stay healthy and embrace life after cancer. Through this initiative, survivors find strength and resilience, discovering new pathways to wellness and a renewed sense of purpose.

As we come together to support these brave individuals, we celebrate every milestone in their journey. The resources provided through the Cancer Survivor Wellness Program transform lives, helping survivors transition from fighting cancer to thriving in their post-treatment lives.

Your involvement in this journey speaks volumes about the compassion and support within our community. Together, we can ensure that survivors have the tools they need to thrive, embracing their second chances with vigor and hope.



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Impact Stories is a Benevolent Voice publication of Ascension Borgess Foundation for donors and friends in the community.

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please contact:
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Benevolent Voice IMPACTStories

YOUR GIVING IMPACTS PATIENTS AND YOUR COMMUNITY Fall 2024

From survivor to advocate: Katie's breast cancer journey

Katie's journey with breast cancer highlights the importance of early detection and resilience. Having witnessed her mother and aunt battle the disease, she learned about courage long before her own diagnosis.

Today, as an Estrogen+, HER2 breast cancer survivor, Katie's path was unexpected. What started as a routine breast reduction appointment turned into a shocking stage 1A cancer diagnosis after further testing. With the support of a dedicated medical team at Ascension Borgess, she navigated a series of mammograms, CT scans, and surgeries. She learned she had the HER2 gene, which could have taken her life in as little as a year if left undetected.

Facing this news was terrifying, especially with two young daughters, but Katie was grateful for the early detection that allowed her to fight. Unfortunately, many women do not have the same chance.

Programs like Tree of Love are essential in providing access to early detection testing. Through community donations, these initiatives offer vital resources and support to women facing similar challenges.

Katie's story underscores the impact of early detection and community support. Thanks to generous contributions, more women can find hope and strength in their journeys. Together, we can advocate for early screening, ensuring every woman has the opportunity to face cancer with courage.



Free breast health services Call to see if you qualify 269-226-7026

You may qualify for a free mammogram:

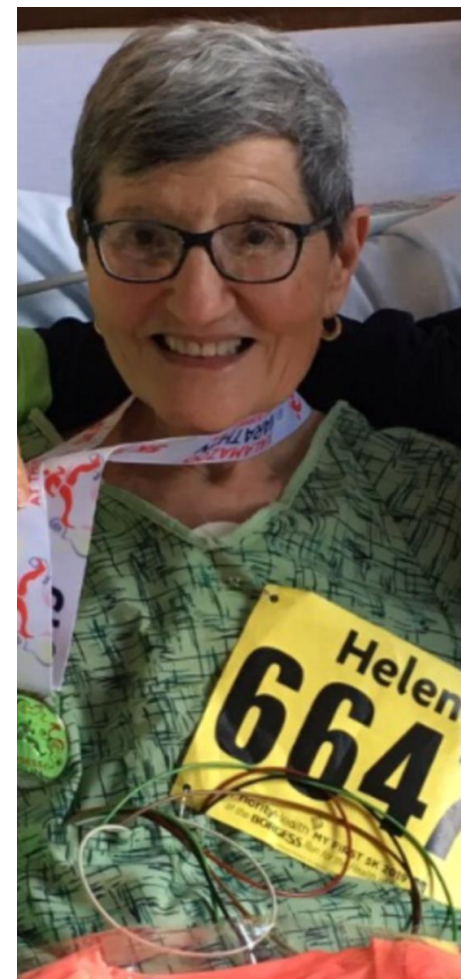
- Uninsured or underinsured women and men in southwest Michigan
- Any Borgess location providing mammography services
- Speak directly with a Patient Financial Advocate
- Simple screening process

Taking healthy living to heart: Grateful patient stresses the importance of health screenings

For many years, 83-year-old Helen Magas of Kalamazoo has maintained an impressive workout routine that is the envy of her peers. Each day, Helen performs strength, balance and flexibility workouts with weights, tension bands and exercise balls. She also rides a stationary bike, walks on a treadmill and participates in Zumba classes.

“Health and fitness mean everything to me,” says Helen, a retired physical therapist for special education children. “I’ve always been very health-conscious. It’s important to stay fit so you can get around, especially as you get older.”

Helen and her late husband Thomas, who was a pharmacist, began taking walks together years ago at a local nature center. Now, Helen tracks her steps, tallying near 10,000 per day.



So it’s no surprise that Helen is a regular entrant in 5K walking events. But before competing in the 5K walk portion of the 2019 Kalamazoo Marathon/Borgess Run, Helen received a surprising and potentially life-threatening health diagnosis.

The day before the event, Helen went to Ascension Borgess Hospital for a free heart health screening event. That’s when she learned she had a significant blockage in the atrioventricular node, which connects the heart’s electrical systems.

“I thought I’d pass the screening with flying colors. In addition to my exercises, I follow a Mediterranean diet. But the doctor said my EKG results were irregular and there was a problem with the electrical component of my heart.”

“The doctor said that if I did the walk the next day, I might have had a serious health issue.”

Helen immediately went to the ER at Ascension Borgess, where she received a pacemaker in the Ascension Borgess Heart Institute Cardiovascular Lab (CVL). Philanthropic gifts by generous donors have helped establish the CVL as a premier center with excellent facilities, highly experienced physicians and surgeons, and state-of-the-art equipment.

“I received excellent medical care at Borgess. The doctors and nurses closely monitored my condition and were as kind as they could be. They always had my best interest at heart and treated me like family.” – Helen M.

After discharge, Helen soon began experiencing shortness of breath and swelling in her legs. She returned to Ascension Borgess Hospital and received a congestive heart failure diagnosis. But after subsequent hospital treatment and physical therapy, Helen made a full recovery.

“Today, I feel very good,” says Helen, who’s also an avid gardener. “I have the doctors at Borgess to thank for that. And I believe my positive attitude makes a difference. I’m taking more fitness classes than ever and I continue to enter walks. In fact, I’ve already signed up for the 2025 5K.”

In gratitude for the exemplary care she received from the doctors, nurses and staff at Borgess Hospital, Helen has chosen to make annual charitable gifts from her IRA to the Ascension Borgess Foundation. She chose to designate her gifts to the Borgess Heart Institute and Borgess Cancer Center.

“I was very lucky to have learned about the healthy heart screening event at Borgess,” Helen says. “It’s very important to take advantage of these events, no matter how good you feel, no matter what your age.”



To learn more or to make a gift to the Ascension Borgess Foundation, scan the QR code or visit borgessfoundation.org

“Today, I feel very good. I have the doctors at Borgess to thank for that.”

