



Cedar Valley Cancer Committee

TOUCH OF COURAGE

CONNECTION NEWSLETTER

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ATTENTION FOCUSED ON IOWA'S RISING CANCER RATES

BY LINDA BOWMAN, BPT MEMBER

Note: The following 3 articles share how Iowans are making Iowa's rising cancer rate a priority.

Iowa's high cancer rate impacts more young people - National media takes a closer look at the issue.

The 2025 Cancer in Iowa report revealed that Iowa's cancer rate is the second-fastest growing in the country. A recent investigation reveals that the news is even worse for younger Iowans.

The Washington Post published an in-depth report on Oct. 27, 2025, investigating the number of young adults (20s, 30s and 40s) in Iowa and other Midwest corn belt states who've been diagnosed with cancer.

Among the personal stories profiled in the Washington Post report were:

- A 25-year-old waitress in West Des Moines whose complaints of a pea-sized lump were dismissed repeatedly; she insisted it was more than a cyst and was finally diagnosed with Stage 3 breast cancer. Beatrice Abang-Ntuen is now a nursing student who, at age 29, says she feels more like 78 from the after-effects of cancer treatment.
- A group of five recent Winterset high school graduates who have testicular cancer or a blood cancer (non-Hodgkin's lymphoma or Hodgkin's lymphoma). Three were diagnosed as Stage 4, one was Stage 3-4, and one was Stage 2; their ages at diagnosis were 18, 19, 21, 23 and 28.
- A West Des Moines woman diagnosed with cervical cancer at age 30; now, at 42, she wears a feeding tube 24/7 for nutrition because of the damage done to her digestive system.

Post reporters reviewed data using the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Wonder software, and their analysis revealed that the rate of cancer among young people in Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, Indiana and Illinois is 5% higher than the rest of the country.

Cancer frequency in those top six corn producing states had been about the same as the rest of the country's in 1999, both for young adults and the overall population.

But rates started rising in the 2000s and, by 2015, the six states have been much higher in cancer rates for those ages 15 to 49. Now they are a full 5% higher for young adults and 5% higher for the overall population.

In 2000, the state of Iowa ranked 18th in cancer incidence for adults under the age of 50, now the state ranks 5th.

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LIVING THIS AMAZING LIFE I HAVE BEEN GIVEN

A SURVIVOR STORY OF KATY BAUMGARDNER



In September of 2020, I went in to get my very first mammogram. I almost didn't do it; I had a meeting to get to at work and thought "no one in my family has cancer, that won't be what I get", plus, I was only 41 years old. But I changed my mind, and I decided I'd better go. Two hours after the mammogram, I got a call. That call was

what I would still describe as the scariest part of this entire journey – I could hear the panic in the nurse's voice as she told me that they'd found a lump, and that I needed to get to the cancer center immediately. Two days later, I was biopsied, and the following week I was told I did, in fact, have breast cancer. My friends and family in the room were in tears, trying to process what we'd just been told. But I felt like I already knew that I was not going to be told that it wasn't cancer; I knew from that phone call what my diagnosis would be – so I was calm, stone faced and simply asked what we do next.

It was November of 2020, at the height of COVID when I had my double mastectomy. Miraculously, I didn't get sick while I was in the hospital, but the staff was noticeably short and I remembered feeling a bit like an afterthought, though I knew they were doing their best. The next month, I was told I would start chemo, followed by radiation. My hair started falling out around Christmas time that year.

Winter came and went; perhaps a silver lining for me that COVID coincided with chemo, I could essentially hide indoors while dealing with it all. I couldn't bring anyone with me to chemo due to the pandemic, but my mom showed up to the parking lot every time to give me a hug and a smile and sometimes a note on my car. Chemo eventually came to an end after five months and radiation began. By July of 2021, I had completed my treatment and was ready to start feeling like myself again. They

called this the "marathon" part of the treatment. When suddenly, you're done, and you look back at the blur of what just happened to your life and you must find a way to adjust and process who you are now; which is different than before in so many ways. After my mastectomy, they told me I was cancer free. The chemotherapy and radiation were an extra preventative, so I was feeling like I did everything right and was ending the treatment as an A+ student.

Then, as I know so many of us fear, the cancer returned. In February of this year, my chiropractor noticed a lump on my chest. She suggested I get it checked out and I left there and went straight to the ER. After an ultrasound there, a CT scan a week later, a biopsy the week after that and a PET scan after a month, it was my truth – the cancer had returned. Recurring breast cancer that had moved to my bones. By default, because of its recurrence, I was diagnosed with Stage 4 metastatic breast cancer. Metastatic was a word I had tried to bury in my vocabulary, but now I was to face it without a choice. The good news was that since it is the same type of breast cancer, I could take a pill to combat it, rather than IV chemo again. A silver lining for sure. And now, I will continue this treatment until the cancer outsmarts it. And when it does, I will try a new treatment, and I will make that work too.

Today, I am feeling good. This is not the end for me. I go to work, I sing in a band, I take care of my three beautiful children, I travel, I perform in community theatre, I go to concerts, I spend time with my friends and family. I am LIVING this amazing life I have been given. And now, I am a survivor, but also a warrior. And if this diagnosis does anything positive, it shows you how beautiful and precious life is. When you stop and see what you have, what you've accomplished and who you have in your life, you are appreciative and grateful for each day.

I have earned these scars, and I will continue to fight. I have much more to see and do.

SURVIVORSHIP COURSE

UnityPoint Health Allen Hospital Waterloo Community Cancer Center is planning the next FREE course to support cancer survivors of any type and their care partners. This course will provide practical guidance for life after cancer treatment, including research-based advice on topics like nutrition, exercise and reducing anxiety for survivors of any type of cancer. For more information or to be added to the contact list for future offerings, contact Mary Kobliska, Social Worker at Allen Hospital Community Cancer Center at 319-236-4721.



BPT Giving Back at Allen School of Nursing Trick 'N Treat Event

19TH ANNUAL PINK RIBBON RUN - ANOTHER SUCCESS!

With the support of the Cedar Valley Community, sponsors and the many volunteers and participants, the 2025 PRR was able to raise \$88,785.34 helping to provide 129 individuals so far this year with financial support.

Here's a few interesting statistics to see how this was all done:

**1,564 registered
(includes the 99 virtual racers)**

74 teams

**242 survivors,
1,909 years of survivorship**

Participant age range: 2-93

Thank you to all the wonderful participants and sponsors who continue to support this event year after year. Next year will be the 20th Annual Pink Ribbon Run on Saturday, October 3rd!

19TH ANNUAL
PINK RIBBON RUN | 2025



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Unfortunately, the data does not provide an answer to the question on everyone's mind: Why?

Researchers the Post talked to have started shifting away from traditional thought regarding personal behaviors and genetics, and more toward the everyday environment.

"We've changed what we're exposed to considerably in the past few decades," Washington University School of Medicine professor Gary Patti told the Post.

Those changes could be making our bodies age faster, paving the way for earlier diseases.

Iowa's 2026 Cancer in Iowa Report coming soon

This annual report is produced by the Iowa Cancer Registry at the University of Iowa College of Public Health. Each report reveals the current status of cancer in the state and focuses on a specific theme; past issues have taken an in-depth look at survivorship, alcohol-related cancers, and research.

Watch for the 2026 report in late February. We will provide a link on the Beyond Pink TEAM's Facebook page.

Building a healthier, sustainable Iowa in 2026

The Iowa Environmental Council (IEC) is a nonpartisan alliance of organizations including the Iowa Cancer Coalition, of which Beyond Pink TEAM is a member.

IEC is calling on state lawmakers to take bold steps in 2026 to protect Iowans' health and strengthen our environment. This year's priorities focus on three urgent challenges:

- **Radon** is the second-leading cause of lung cancer in Iowa, claiming about 400 lives each year. Most counties are at the nation's highest risk level, yet many families don't know if their homes are affected. The IEC urges the legislature to invest in programs that expand testing and mitigation across homes, schools, and businesses — protecting families and reducing healthcare costs.

- **Clean water** is essential for healthy communities and ecosystems. But after funding cuts in 2023, 60 water-quality sensors are expected to go offline in 2026, making it harder to track pollution and design effective solutions. The IEC is advocating for \$600,000 in annual state funding to restore and expand the Iowa Water Quality Information System, so we have tools to understand and protect our waterways.

- **Coal ash** — a toxic byproduct of coal-fired power plants — contains dangerous substances like arsenic, mercury, and lead. Iowa has 69 known coal ash disposal sites across 16 counties. The IEC is calling for legislation to prohibit coal ash leachate discharges into waterways, strengthen groundwater monitoring and require robust cleanup measures — all to keep drinking water and recreational areas safe.

You can help: Make sure you have tested your home for radon. And speak up by contacting your legislators about the issues listed above.

We can work together to protect both people and the environment for generations to come. Learn more at iaenvironment.org.

NEW LEADERSHIP, STRONG ADVOCACY: BEYOND PINK TEAM MOVES FORWARD



After 29 years leading Beyond Pink TEAM's advocacy work with the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC), Christine Carpenter is relocating to Oregon to be closer to family. Her move marks a transition—but not a slowdown—in BPT's advocacy strength.

BPT member **Lori Seawel** will step up from Alternate Delegate to serve as

BPT's **Director/Delegate to NBCC**. Stepping into Lori's former role as **Alternate Director** is **Kristin Teig Torres**, a longtime NBCC advocate with more than 15 years of involvement. Kristin attends NBCC's Annual Leadership Summit, regularly lobbies Iowa's Congressional delegation, and serves as a mentor for NBCC's Project LEAD Institute.

Advocacy That Saves Lives

Beyond Pink TEAM's advocacy has had a direct impact on the lives of Iowans.

Care for Yourself Program:

Thanks to persistent BPT advocacy, income-eligible Iowans screened through the Care for Yourself Breast and Cervical Cancer Program gain immediate Medicaid coverage if cancer is detected. This life-saving policy became law after BPT members met with Senator Grassley in his Waterloo office on a frigid December evening and successfully urged him to champion the Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act, signed into law in January 2000.

HER2-Positive Breast Cancer Research:

If you were diagnosed with HER2-positive breast cancer, you have benefited from BPT's efforts as well. The earliest research breakthroughs for this once highly lethal cancer were funded by the **Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program (DOD BCRP)**—a program created in 1991 to support “high-risk, high-reward” breast cancer research. It requires renewed Congressional funding each year.

Congressional funding each year.

Since 1996, Iowa's BPT advocates have consistently secured bipartisan support from Iowa's Senators and Representatives for annual funding of the DOD BCRP. This year, even amid proposed 65% cuts recommended by Elon Musk's DOGE task force, the program was largely protected because of strong, sustained Congressional backing—backing BPT helped build. Many of today's lifesaving treatments, surgical advances, and early-stage discoveries trace their origins to DOD BCRP grants.

Your Voice Matters

BPT's advocacy has already saved countless lives—but the work is far from over. You can help ensure continued progress:

- Respond to **Iowa Stop Breast Cancer** Facebook Advocacy Alerts
- Email your Members of Congress when action is needed
- Share advocacy posts on social media
- Encourage others to get involved

Together, we can continue driving change—and saving lives.



SASSY PANTS FITNESS - FREE ZOOM FITNESS CLASSES

OFFERED BY MARY FRIEDRICH

Sassy Pants Fitness for Active-Agers provides virtual and on-demand low-impact standing and seated classes for active-agers. Classes have a focus on functional fitness, provide a balanced workout, maintain/retain core strength as well as general mobility and balance so you can enjoy a positive quality of life!

When: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 - 10:15 am on Zoom.

All classes are no-cost and free to join at any time!

"Reminder: even though sometimes our range of motion may be small, it's consistent movement that builds

flexibility, strength, and longevity. Keep moving friends!!!"

Here is a link to a Google form that people can complete to send their name and contact information:
<https://forms.gle/6Cg6KhMqGurWESTC7>

Sassy Pants Fitness YouTube page:
<https://youtube.com/@sassypantsfitnessforactive-age?si=kDpRSsib51Zukb8J>

Sassy Pants Fitness Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1DGgihmVg5/>

2026 ADVOCATE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT - NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER!!!

Join us for the **2026 Advocate Leadership Summit in Washington, DC on April 25-27** at the Washington Marriott at Metro Center, followed by **Lobby Day on Capitol Hill on April 28!**

About the Advocate Leadership Summit

For more than 30 years, the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) has equipped advocates with the education, tools, and training they need to lead. NBCC empowers breast cancer survivors, caregivers, and allies to take on leadership roles in clinical research, science, health policy, and legislation—driving change that directly impacts breast cancer outcomes.

The **Advocate Leadership Summit** is NBCC's premier annual event, bringing together advocates from across the United States and around the world. At the Summit, participants:

- Learn the latest breakthroughs in breast cancer science from world-renowned researchers.
- Gain hands-on training in advocacy strategies that influence research, healthcare, and public policy.

- Connect with grassroots leaders and peers who share a commitment to ending breast cancer.
- Engage with public policy experts to sharpen skills for effective action on Capitol Hill and beyond.

The Summit is more than a conference—it is a movement. Each year, women and men affected by breast cancer gather to strengthen their voices, expand their knowledge, and take collective action to end breast cancer.

Registration and shared hotel rooms are available for Beyond Pink TEAM members—but you must apply!

The deadline to apply is January 31, 2026.

Learn more at stopbreastcancer.org

Have questions? Contact:

Lori Seawel - lori.seawel@seawel.com

Joy Thorson - jthorson1234@gmail.com

Join us for an empowering weekend.

Be heard. Lead the way.



SEEKING PARTICIPANTS FOR A STUDY: COUPLES' COMMUNICATION ABOUT METASTATIC BREAST CANCER

What is this study about?

Researchers at the University of Connecticut are seeking individuals with metastatic breast cancer to participate in a study about couples' intimacy.

Why are we doing this research?

We hope the findings from the study will be useful for individuals facing metastatic breast cancer by identifying communication practices that help couples manage the challenges of cancer on their relationship.

What do I have to do?

Eligible participants will be asked to complete a 45 minute online survey that includes scales and open-ended questions.

Next steps and questions?

Complete a brief 5-minute screening survey. You will be contacted by a research team member if you qualify to participate! Questions can be sent to CouplesCommAboutCancerStudy@uconn.edu.

Screening Survey
Link or QR Code →
<https://tinyurl.com/UConnMBCStudy>



THANK YOU to the generosity of the following individuals, businesses, and organizations for their donations to the Beyond Pink TEAM from September 1, 2025 through November 30, 2025.

DONATIONS

AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary #49
 AMVETS Post #49
 AMVETS Riders Chapter 49
 Cindy Angel
 Anne Barloon
 Deborah Bartels
 Vicky Bjortomt
 Lisa Brodersen
 Patricia Buls
 Bunger Family Foundation
 Christine Carpenter
 Jeff Coons
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 Cinda Dodd
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 Marjorie Riley
 Kenneth Smith
 Sons of AMVETS Post 49
 Todd Southworth
 Helen Steffen
 Mary Steffensmeier
 TCG Industries Inc
 Tammy Versluis
 Cynthia Wilson
 XI ZETA SIGMA Chapter

HONORARIUMS

In Honor of Mary Jo Juhl
 Janis Hansen
 In Honor of Team Pink for Patty
 (Pat Leonhart)
 Cindy Bierstedt
 Cynthia Campbell
 Joanne Danielsen
 Rebecca Diercks
 Roger Donaldson
 Paul Empie
 Benjamin Freeman
 Roxanne Franzen
 Susan Garbes
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 Helen Schumacher
 Sonja Stegge
 Mary Stevens
 Audrey Thompson
 Shirlely Thurm
 Lori Thurm
 Karen Thurm
 Terrie Thurm
 Jillian White

MEMORIAL GIFTS

In Memory of Nancy Fengler
 Trish Pedersen
 In Memory Peggy Homeister
 Pat Homeister
 Susie Smith
 In Memory of Martha Kohlmeyer
 Marty and Dee Hughes
 In Memory of Team Sherry
 George and Dawn Deboard



Bambino's



CV Cyclist



AMVETS Ladies Auxiliary



Texas Roadhouse



Denver Cheer Team

FUNDRAISERS

Bambino's Bakery
Cedar Valley Cyclist Bike Ride
Denver Community School
Cheer Pink Out
Green Belt Bank & Trust
Thriving Beyond Pink Campaign
In honor of Sarah Wessels
New Hartford Creamery
"Strawberry Scoops for a Cause"
NuCara Home Medical
T-shirt Sales
Pillar to Post - David Kelling October Home Inspections
Smitty's 0.4L Spooky Walk Around the Block
Sumner American Legion
Post 223 Bar
UTV Poker Run

Swarm Sports Bar UTV
Poker Run
Texas Roadhouse
The Vibe
Tyson Fresh Meats Inc.
United Methodist Church
Wartburg Pink Knight Soccer
Waterloo Firefighters
Cedar Falls St. John Lutheran Church - Service & Discipleship Group's Wine, Women & Word Event



Smitty's



Wartburg Soccer

NEW TO CANCER? HAVE ALL SORTS OF QUESTIONS?

The Beyond Pink TEAM has created a series of videos all in one place to help you through your cancer journey. Check it out on our website, www.beyondpinkteam.org or use this QR code. We're here to support you.



DATES TO REMEMBER

JANUARY - APRIL 2026

January 5, 1:30 pm

Touch of Courage
Breast Cancer Support Group
Community Foundation of NE Iowa
3117 Greenhill Circle, Cedar Falls
Pat 319-610-4424 for information

January 6, 1:30 pm

Care & Share Cancer Support Group
MercyOne Cancer Treatment Center
200 E Ridgeway Ave, Waterloo
Sarah 319-272-2816 for meeting info

January 14, 6:30 pm

Waverly Breast Cancer Support Group
Waverly Health Center
Tendrils Rooftop Garden
312 9th St. SW, Waverly
Emily 319-352-4926 for information

January 20, 5:00-7:00 pm

BPT All Cancer Survivor Group
Cedar Valley Unitarian Universalists Church
3912 Cedar Heights Drive, Cedar Falls
Angela 319-231-3143 for information

February 2, 1:30 pm

Touch of Courage
Breast Cancer Support Group
Community Foundation of NE Iowa
3117 Greenhill Circle, Cedar Falls
Pat 319-610-4424 for information

February 3, 1:30 pm

Care & Share Cancer Support Group
MercyOne Cancer Treatment Center
200 E Ridgeway Ave, Waterloo
Sarah 319-272-2816 for meeting info

February 11, 5:00-7:00 pm

Waverly Breast Cancer Support Group
Waverly Health Center
Tendrils Rooftop Garden
312 9th St. SW, Waverly
Emily 319-352-4926 for information

March 2, 1:30 pm

Touch of Courage
Breast Cancer Support Group
Community Foundation of NE Iowa
3117 Greenhill Circle, Cedar Falls
Pat 319-610-4424 for information

March 3, 1:30 pm

Care & Share Cancer Support Group
MercyOne Cancer Treatment Center
200 E Ridgeway Ave, Waterloo
Sarah 319-272-2816 for meeting info

March 11, 6:30 pm

Waverly Breast Cancer Support Group
Waverly Health Center
Tendrils Rooftop Garden
312 9th St. SW, Waverly
Emily 319-352-4926 for information

April 6, 1:30 pm

Touch of Courage
Breast Cancer Support Group
Community Foundation of NE Iowa
3117 Greenhill Circle, Cedar Falls
Pat 319-961-4424 for information

April 7, 1:30 pm

Care & Share Cancer Support Group
MercyOne Cancer Treatment Center
200 E Ridgeway Ave, Waterloo
Sarah 319-272-2816 for meeting info

April 14, 6:30 pm

Waverly Breast Cancer Support Group
Waverly Health Center
Tendrils Rooftop Garden
312 9th St. SW, Waverly
Emily 319-352-4926 for information


April 21, 5:00-7:00 pm

BPT All Cancer Survivor Group
Cedar Valley Unitarian Universalists Church
3912 Cedar Heights Drive, Cedar Falls
Angela 319-231-3143 for information

RESOURCES

Information, support, counseling, and educational materials are available from the following:

Beyond Pink TEAM is a local breast cancer organization providing a variety of services. Our website lists services we provide as well as other services available in the Cedar Valley. beyondpinkTEAM.org

 You can also find us on Facebook.

Living Beyond Breast Cancer includes a helpline, newsletter, and information. LBBC.org
Survivors Helpline: 888-753-5222

Cancer Care is a national nonprofit organization offering counseling, support, financial assistance, and education to individuals with cancer and their families.

cancercare.org

Iowa Cancer Consortium offers cancer information and links to resources in Iowa. canceriowa.org

American Cancer Society offers cancer information and services. cancer.org.

National Breast Cancer Coalition's mission is to eradicate breast cancer by focusing the government, research institutions, and consumer advocates on breast cancer. It encourages advocacy for action and change. stopbreastcancer.org.

National Comprehensive Cancer Network® (NCCN) provides state-of-the-art treatment information in easy-to-understand language to people with cancer and their caregivers. NCCN.org/patients

National LGBT Cancer Network works to improve the lives of LGBT cancer survivors and those at risk. cancer-network.org

National Cancer Institute offers information about cancer, breast cancer, clinical trials, cancer statistics, research and funding, and the latest news. They will also answer your questions by calling 1-800-4CANCER. cancer.gov

National Cancer Institute provides dictionaries of cancer terms, genetics terms, and cancer drugs. cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries

Young Survival Coalition connects with other young women diagnosed with breast cancer. youngsurvival.org

CancerChoices is an independent, science-informed resource, helping you make sense of your choice in integrative cancer care. cancerchoices.org

The Cancer Journey provides short 3–5-minute videos featuring survivors, doctors, social workers, and advocates who share their experiences of diagnosis, treatment, after-treatment, living with metastatic cancer, and advocating to end this disease. beyondpinkteam.org/the-cancer-journey.html

MISSION | Beyond Pink TEAM is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide breast cancer prevention, education, support, and advocacy for comprehensive, quality health care for ALL in the Cedar Valley and surrounding communities.

Connect with us . . . We would love to have your energy and passion as part of the Beyond Pink TEAM! We are an all-volunteer organization, which makes us unique. It's amazing what we can accomplish working together.

To become a member of the BPT, complete the form below and send \$10 to the address below. You will receive a Volunteer Opportunity Form to match you with your interests.

Financial support is always needed. If you would like to make a donation to the BPT, you can make a check payable to: **Beyond Pink TEAM** and mail to address below or use **VENMO**.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

ADDRESS

Beyond Pink TEAM
1407 Asbury Lane
Waterloo, IA 50701

VENMO

@beyondpink-jeanne



Scan here for more information
on the Beyond Pink TEAM.

BeyondPinkTEAM.org

