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McCandless woman's foundation offers Glimmer of Hope in battle against breast cancer

TRIB LIVE DEBORAH DEASY | Wednesday, January 7, 2015 5:00 a.m.

Each week, about 50 women get mammograms in Pine on one of the first machines of its kind in the United States, thanks to a McCandless woman's determination to improve all women's odds of beating breast cancer.

“We're getting such rave reviews on this machine. ... We need more of them,” said Diana Napper, 57, of McCandless, founder and executive director of the Glimmer of Hope Foundation.

Napper's nonprofit foundation donated \$171,000 to buy the SenoClaire tomosynthesis unit and its work station for the Allegheny Health Network.

The machine, which can produce three-dimensional breast images, is available at the new Wexford Health & Wellness Pavilion in Pine.

In 1993, Napper, a mother of four, started the Glimmer of Hope Foundation after her best friend, Carol Friedman, formerly of New Jersey, died of breast cancer.

Since then, Napper has raised \$2.7 million for breast-cancer research and patient services through annual benefits and sales of Glimmer of Hope costume jewelry.

Proceeds from the foundation's annual Dimond Family Golf Tournament in North Park and the Pitch for Hope, a yearly fundraiser organized with the Pittsburgh Pirates, helped to pay for the new 3-D breast imaging machine at the Wexford Health & Wellness Pavilion.



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Diane Napper has raised \$2.7 million for breast cancer research and patient services through annual benefits and sales of commissioned, costume jewelry featuring Swarovski crystals. People can currently buy the foundation's Brace Yourself for Change bracelet for \$65 to help purchase more 3-D breast imaging equipment.

Using low-dose X-rays, the SenoClaire tomosynthesis unit can photograph nine layers of breast tissue, which helps physicians differentiate benign from dangerous abnormalities and detect cancer in its earliest stages.

Allegheny Health Network got the 3-D imaging technology in October after the Federal Drug Administration approved the SenoClaire machine in September for use in the

United States. GE Healthcare markets the machine.

“Allegheny Health Network was the first center in the nation to install a SenoClaire unit, GE Healthcare's new 3-D breast imaging tomosynthesis system,” said Ben Fox, spokesman for GE Healthcare.

For women getting a mammogram, the SenoClaire equipment feels the same as other mammogram machines, said mammography technologist Kimberly Lattanzio of Wexford Health & Wellness Pavilion.

“Most are shocked at how easy it is after it's over,” Lattanzio said.

Allegheny Health Network currently uses the SenoClaire tomosynthesis unit to test any woman with a strong family history of breast cancer, plus, women with very dense breast tissue and women whose earlier mammograms showed abnormalities.

“But if a patient wants 3-D (a three-dimensional mammogram), we will oblige that,” Lattanzio said.

Women should check with their insurance providers to see if they will be covered for the cost a three-dimensional mammogram.

Napper said she hopes to set up a fund to help women whose insurance companies might not cover the service.

Dr. William Poller, director of the breast-imaging division of the Allegheny Health Network, said he wanted the SenoClaire unit because of the increasing incidence of breast cancer in younger women and the machine's ability to identify abnormalities in younger women's dense breast tissue.

Poller hopes to acquire more SenoClaire tomosynthesis units for other Allegheny Health Network sites, including Allegheny General Hospital, West Penn Hospital, Forbes Hospital and Allegheny Valley Hospital.

Napper's Glimmer of Hope Foundation supports breast-cancer research and programs for breast-cancer patients at multiple Pittsburgh-area hospitals, including Magee-Womens Hospital — which also offers 3-D breast imaging — and the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center.

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DETAILS

HOW TO HELP

To help support the Glimmer of Hope Foundation, people can purchase the foundation's Brace Yourself for Change bracelet for \$65. Proceeds will be used to help buy 3-D breast imaging equipment.

People can order a Brace Yourself for Change Bracelet and other Glimmer of Hope Foundation fundraising items at the foundation's web site: symbolofthecure.com. For more information, call 800-454-6746.

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