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'Don't ignore the warning signs' is loudest message from Walk of Hope

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While Rudy and Beverly Bess haven't lived in Metropolis for over 55 years, it's still the place they call home.

Some 18 years ago, it was their dream to place the first lighthouse on the banks of the Ohio River as a symbol of hope to those affected by cancer. After that dream was fulfilled in June 2014 with the raising of the 30-foot structure at Dorothy Miller Park, the Besses' next goal was to hold

regular events geared toward cancer education.

That inaugural event took place Saturday, Sept. 23. The Cancer Warriors Walk of Hope was not a fundraiser but "a day full of fun and resources for cancer patients, caregivers and family members of all ages," said Bess, Hope Light Foundation founding director.

"We're enthused and happy we've finally made it," he continued. "This could not have happened without

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Attendees are "Strollin' Through the Colon" during the inaugural Cancer Warriors Walk of Hope. The walk was held Saturday, Sept. 23, at Dorothy Miller Park.

BURNETT CROWNED MCHS HOMECOMING QUEEN



J-MG looking into renovations for high school

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The Joppa-Maple Grove school board unofficially began its regular meeting on Monday, Sept. 25, conducting a walk-through of the Joppa Junior/Senior High School building with architect Steve May.

Some 30 minutes later, May provided public comment on the ways to improve the building that now also houses Maple Grove Elementary School.

Board members Danny Burnett, Rachel Henson and Corey Willenborg were absent from the meeting.

The walk-through generated several items the board would like to see addressed. May provided cost and completion estimates for each. Discussed during the public comment section were:

- Replacement of the fascia on the building. May noted there are several spots where the rock panels are detaching. Replacing the 500 linear feet with Drivet, which is foam with stucco look, would cost \$150

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CANCER

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Shawna Rhine and the Southern 7 Health Department. She has been such a workaholic in making this happen — getting everyone together, chairing the meetings. Southern 7 did a great job on this.”

Rhine is Southern 7’s outreach community coordinator/public information officer. She emphasized the idea behind the Cancer Warriors Walk of Hope is “to make a fun event on a topic that is hard to talk about.”

The park was filled with games, bounce houses, face painting, a balloon artist, prize drawings and yoga along with information booths by Siteman Cancer Center in St. Louis, Union County Hospital in Anna, Banterra Bank of Metropolis, Massac Memorial Hospital, Community Health & Emergency Services (CHESI) in Cairo, Southern 7 Health Department, Hope Light Foundation, Chiropractic Works/Thor’s Gym in Metropolis, West Kentucky Community and Technical College, Southern Illinois Tobacco Disparities Partnership (SITDP), Invitae Corporation, Metropolis Fire Department, Southern Illinois Center for Independent Living (SICIL) in Metropolis and Rural Health, Inc. in Anna.

“I like to see something like this happen,” said Bill Carrell, watching the interactions that took place during the three-hour event.

Carrell is the official keeper of the Metropolis Hope Light Lighthouse, an honor bestowed on him during the lighthouse’s dedication in November 2014 in honor of his work on the project since its inception in 2005 when he became the chairman of the Metropolis Hope Light Project committee, working to promote the project and raise funds and obtain volunteer labor and materials to build the lighthouse. As its keeper, Carrell continues to oversee operation of the lighthouse and sales and installation of personalized walkway bricks.

“We don’t have a tall lighthouse, but we have the only lighthouse dedicated to the treatment, prevention and cure of cancer,” Carrell said.

Each segment of the Metropolis Hope Light Lighthouse has a special significance: the 10-foot black lantern room represents the dark journey cancer patients go through; the 2 1/2-foot teal-colored daymark band represents the fight against not only ovarian cancer but all cancers; the 20-foot conical shaped, steel sided, white tower is a tribute to the fight against lung cancer; and the non-flashing white light projecting from the lantern room represents hope.

“This event is wonderful.



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The Metropolis Hope Light Lighthouse was erected in Dorothy Miller Park in June 2014 as the first lighthouse on the banks of the Ohio River to be a symbol of hope to those affected by cancer.

It’s a genius idea. Such a great cause,” said Chase Hileman, the community outreach coordinator with Rural Health, Inc. “What the day is about is very impactful. Just to have a day to come out, forget about it and have fun whether you’ve had cancer, survived it or know someone who’s been through it, it’s a day to put all that aside while at the same time realize you’re seen, thought of and important.”

Rhine said that attendees voiced their appreciation for the event and the plethora and variety of information that was shared. Along with cancer education, she noted the day “is a wonderful opportunity for people to get information from those providers. A lot of the screenings people need, we can do right here in our communities. These folks work very closely with the physicians in our region. We want our residents to know cancer care is here and available to them when they need it.”

Harry Brockus, CEO of Union County Hospital, noted the area’s small local hospitals can provide cancer patients “the care they need in between their cancer treatments at the larger hospitals,” ranging from fluids to pharmaceutical infusions to help with white blood cell counts.

Don Robbins, CEO of Massac Memorial Hospital, added that these small local hospitals can also provide screening opportunities, like mammography, and rehabilitation.

“I think the biggest part of this event is if you feel like something’s not right or if you feel a lump or anything like that, do not ignore it or bury your head in the sand thinking it’s going to go away. Go get checked out by your physician, then let them move you on to get hospital screening. Don’t ignore the warning signs,” Robbins said.



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Rudy Bess, Bill Carrell and Beverly Bess take a moment to reflect on the history of the Metropolis Hope Light Lighthouse during the Cancer Warriors Walk of Hope.



Kelli Corner, grant supervisor, discusses the Southern Illinois Tobacco Disparities Partnership (SITDP) with attendees of Saturday’s Cancer Warriors Walk of Hope.

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Sarah Chavez, the assistant director of community outreach at Siteman Cancer Center, noted that all of the vendors “are partners in this. We don’t care where you get screened, we just want you to get screened and have the resources you need. That’s one of the big tools of these partnerships — finding who needs help and what we can do to help that individual hospital system or county if we start to see a lot of cancer in a particular area, what can we do as a team to find out what’s causing it or what screening to implement. Not everybody has access to the same resources, that is where I think we can be the most effective.”

Rochelle Morgan, community navigator with the Illinois Breast & Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP), was on hand to discuss the screening opportunities available. Operated out of CHESI, IBCCP covers the southern seven area providing free mammograms, breast exams, pelvic exams and pap tests to eligible women.

While the day provided the public opportunities to gather information about cancer, including taking part in the genetic cancer testing offered by Southern 7, Invitae and the Hope Light Foundation, it was

also a way for the participating vendors to network.

Chavez has worked with the Hope Light Foundation for several years. She’s also part of the Illinois Cancer Partnership as the co-chair of the prevention subcommittee.

“We’re here to make more connections to have more of a voice from southern Illinois on the partnership, which is a consortium of anyone involved with cancer care and wants to do more. We want to make people aware of the simple steps they can take to reduce their cancer risk or the steps in catching cancer early,” she said. “We want to take away the stigma. I don’t want people to feel like cancer has to be a big scary thing. There is support out there. That’s why it’s important to have these groups that are working to reduce the barriers people have to getting care, screening and genetic testing.”

Getting the word out, she continued, is the key. “Some know cancer runs in their family, but what does that really mean? Don’t hesitate to get screened. It can save your life.”

Other vendors provided information on ways to prevent cancer.

SITDP is operated out of Southern Illinois Healthcare (SIH) in Carbondale. Kelli Cor-

ner is the SITDP grant supervisor. Covering the southern 16 counties, SITDP is a grant that provides educational materials on reducing smoking and the use of vapes, while also keeping youth from ever starting. Part of the program, she explained is “engaging youth in positive change” by encouraging students to create new school policies against on-campus smoking and vaping. Corner noted the program works in many areas — with retailers to make sure they check IDs and not selling to anyone under 21; schools; area park and recreation departments; home rule communities — to make areas smoke and vape free.

The event also provided an outlet for the public to learn more about other organizations, like SICIL. Kathy McDermott and Lisa Reiss provided information on the center which works with people with disabilities in the southern seven counties, specifically by providing resources to help them stay in their homes.

Plans are to make the Cancer Warriors Walk of Hope an annual event each September, providing more the opportunity to take “advantage of our cancer information and material and learn more about it,” Bess said. “What we’re trying to do is make everybody like Beverly, a 40-year survivor.”

The day was presented in partnership by Massac Memorial Hospital, Union County Hospital, Rural Health, Inc., CHESI, Southern 7 Health Department, Hope Light Foundation and Banterra Bank of Metropolis.

“We’re proud to be able to support the health department and what they do for southern Illinois,” Brockus said. “This is about raising awareness about cancer. Cancer has touched all of us.”

Robbins touched on the importance of events like the Cancer Warriors Walk of Hope to promote “the need for cancer awareness, cancer prevention and an opportunity to become educated about the different forms of cancer and the things that can be done to try to detect and manage that disease. Hopefully, through education we’ll have fewer impacted in the most devastating way, which is losing a loved one. That’s the goal.”

Rhine encouraged those who weren’t able to attend Saturday’s event to contact its participants.

“If you’ve recently had a cancer diagnosis and are starting that journey, get with our providers and see what’s available locally. Our doctors want to work with you,” she said. “Our providers can help with CAT scans, PET scans, blood tests, whatever you need and they stay in contact with your doctor so you’re not having to drive one or two hours away as often.”