



the Wheels of Women's Health

STATEWIDE GRANT YIELDS NEW MOBILE MAMMOGRAPHY UNIT—AND MORE

When Kathy Cook, 49, climbed into the University of Tennessee Medical Center's new mobile mammography unit last summer, she hadn't had a mammogram in four years, despite her family history of breast cancer. The reason: An off-site medical appointment would take too much time from her work at the Melaleuca Company factory in Knoxville. But with the mobile unit parked outside the factory's door, Cook could be back on the job in 15 minutes.

She's one of many women who are benefiting from the \$1,122,834 Tennessee Women's Health Initiative (TWHI) grant awarded by Tennessee Attorney General Paul Summers in January 2004. The three-year grant provided \$292,500 toward the purchase of the mammography unit that cost almost \$500,000.

The grant initiative began in July 2003, when the National Consortium of Breast Centers, Inc. in Warsaw, Indiana informed Linda B. Cruze, RN, BSN, CMC, coordinator of the Breast Care Service at UT Medical Center, that the attorney general had funding to offer. Would the center help develop a statewide grant aimed at improving women's breast health?

Cruze began combing the state for medical professionals who could represent each of four regions—East and Northeast Tennessee, Mid-Tennessee East, Mid-Tennessee West, and West Tennessee. She also contacted county health department representatives that offer the Tennessee Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. Six to eight core group members met in Nashville every six weeks or so, sorting out breast-care needs in each region.

It didn't take long for East Tennessee representatives to agree on the need for a new mobile unit. UT Medical Center has had a mobile mammography program since 1988, but for several years, the old unit had experienced increased maintenance problems that sometimes

disrupted the program. The new unit hit the road in June of this year, bringing on-site mammograms to numerous women in its first two months.

The program screens many women throughout East Tennessee annually and visits local businesses, churches, health departments, and senior centers, sometimes multiple times per year. The unit staffed by a driver/receptionist and radiology technologist logs thousands of miles, providing services 10 to 12 hours a day four to five days

each week.

The Cancer Institute also operates the Breast Health Outreach Program (BHOP), designed to enhance the breast health education of underserved women in East Tennessee. Paige Huggler, the program coordinator of BHOP, works with businesses and other organizations in the region to provide on-site education sessions

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UT Medical Center's new mobile mammography van hit the road in June 2005.



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where women have the option of signing up for mammograms once they have completed the education portion of the program.

“Sometimes a company will be hesitant about the outreach program,” says Huggler. “But once they see how seamless the process is, they’re very open to it.”

In addition to the mobile-unit funding, UT Medical Center received a \$70,000 grant to be used for the development of an eight-hour clinical breast examination and instructor certification pilot program for healthcare providers, “the first-ever comprehensive clinical breast exam certification course,” Cruze says. The pilot program, completed in October of this year, was offered free to physicians, nurses, and nurse practitioners in each of the four state regions. “Our goal was to set a standard for clinical breast exams and to measure competency,” says Cruze. The National Consortium of Breast Centers will launch a nationwide version of the program at its March 2006 meeting in Las Vegas.

Another portion of the Tennessee Women’s Health Initiative grant, \$13,500, went to raise awareness of screening and diagnostic services among African-American and Hispanic residents of the state. So far Cordell Simpson, the faith-based program’s coordinator, has reached more than 4,000 parishioners and 300 African-American clergy members in East and Northeast Tennessee and in Chattanooga.

Dorothy Foltz-Gray

Paige Huggler talks with patients about breast care

