

Long Island Volunteer Hall of Fame

Archive Project

Inception to Induction

Colette Coyne Melanoma Awareness Campaign (CCMAC)

Year of Founding: 1999

Issue(s) Addressed: Melanoma, Tanning Beds, Sun Exposure

Induction Category & Year: Health, 2010

Founders: Colette Coyne, Patrick J. Coyne, Thomas H. Coyne, Edward G. Coyne, Mary R. Coyne

Personal Quote from Colette: “Be Sun Smart.”

History: The skin is the largest organ of the human body, and therefore cancer of the skin is the most common. Melanoma is a deadly dangerous skin cancer, and is the sixth most common cancer in American men and the seventh most common cancer in American women. In 1998, a thirty year old woman named Colette Marie Brigid Coyne was diagnosed with melanoma. In response to her death, the Colette Coyne Melanoma Awareness Campaign (CCMAC) began in 1999. There was little awareness of the danger of skin cancer on Long Island, so this was an added motivation to establish the CCMAC foundation in hope of saving other people’s lives.

Colette Coyne had a mole removed at the age of twenty-two and four years later she noticed that a mole on her shoulder had changed. She had surgery and this left a scar on her shoulder. Melanoma was not revealed until she had a sonogram performed four years after her surgery. Colette and Patrick were not able to save their daughter’s life, but they decided to save other people’s lives through their organization that they dedicated to her.

The agency has grown from humble roots. They started with presentations in churches and schools trying to educate students about sun and its dangers. They spoke to the students of BOCES, Long Island in Suffolk County, and they had laws passed in Nassau and Suffolk County about reducing the use of tanning beds by minors. In 2005, they received two awards. One was “CCMAC and Tanning Restrictions for Minors” where the laws were passed regarding the use of

tanning beds by minors. Nassau County passed the law “Colette Coyne Skin Cancer Preventive Law” and Suffolk County passed the law “Colette Coyne Melanoma Awareness Law.”

They received their second award, “The AAD Golden Triangle Award,” in dermatology in recognition of their community education program regarding the dangers of skin cancer. Other than passing laws in these two counties, they also passed a New York State law in 2006 prohibiting the use of tanning beds by minors. CCMAC went on to be publicly recognized beyond Long Island when they received the Special Olympics award in 2006 for Sun Safety Awareness.

Agency Mission: Colette Coyne Melanoma Awareness Campaign aims to target as many families as possible about the dangers and causes of melanoma. Their goal is to pass state laws to prohibit tanning beds. They want to increase public awareness and change people’s attitudes and their behavior regarding the use of tanning beds and the unprotected exposure to the sun’s UV rays. They also want to increase funding for education and research.

Population Served: CCMAC primary serves youth, and they raise awareness based on the research communities such as Environmental Potential Agency (EPA), American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), National Cancer Institute (NCI), and Center for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC recommends that the primary source of Sun Safety Education should be in schools and the secondary source should be through recreational and sports activities. CCMAC educates elementary schools with age appropriate videos that talk about shade covering. In 2009, the organization started their Be Sun Smart Soccer initiative where they started to visit Long Island Junior Soccer Leagues and educate coaches, athletes, and parents on how to prevent getting skin cancer. Race is the main risk factor for developing melanoma, with fair skinned races at a greater risk than darker skinned races. On Long Island, they do stress to people of color that they can also get melanoma. It’s necessary for them to educate all areas of Long Island about the dangers of the sun.

Scope of Activities: CCMAC participates in a variety of educational events that are designed to increase public awareness regarding melanoma. Every year they do variety of community activities such as Miles for Melanoma Run/Walk at Eisenhower Park, a free skin cancer screening at Jones Beach State Park, and Dinner Dance and Auction. Most of the services are free of charge, except the Mile/Run Walk at Eisenhower Park where they charge a small fee of \$20.00 for registration.

Volunteer Involvement: CCMAC is always in need of volunteers and they don’t have a paid staff. Most of the volunteers who work are within the foundation, and those who have been touched by melanoma. They prefer volunteers who are very committed and knowledgeable about the disease. Volunteers do a variety of things, such as educating students in schools through videos, and they participate in events to increase public awareness. They hope to have people who are available to do presentations in schools, and who have special abilities such as making statistical graphs of melanoma. Volunteers work on different types of schedules. People who do school education work about three to four days per month depending on their schedule, and volunteers who work on weekends, work about five to six hours depending on the event.

Funding Sources: CCMAC relies on the community support for funding. The more the community supports the organization, the more stable it will be. They get support from the MLM Health Insurance Company, and their biggest support was OSI Pharmaceuticals, but now this company is no longer on Long Island. Every year they do two important events: Dinner Dance and Auction and Mile Walk/Run at Eisenhower Park to get more support for their work.

Contact Information:

CCMAC

106 Campbell Street

New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11040

(516) 352-4227

www.ccmac.org

cmbc1@optonline.com

Submitted by:

Mustafa Basheer

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