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## Astoria advocate feels women need to 'Embrace' health issues

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If you talk to Fyllis Lobe, you'll hear a woman whose voice exudes energy and intelligence. She's a fast talker, rattling out the string of ideas her sharp brain produces.

But if you bumped into her in a supermarket, chances are the first thing you might notice wouldn't be her bright brown eyes or salt-and-pepper curls.

You'd notice she's riding a shiny red scooter, jetting efficiently from place to place.

"I'm more than my scooter," Lobe said, after sharing a story about how she's sometimes treated differently because she relies on the machine for transportation.

**ALEX PAJUNAS** — *The Daily Astorian* Fyllis Lobe, a retired Astoria High School counselor, hopes women with disabilities will attend the Embracing Breast Health event at the Columbia Memorial Hospital's Wellness Pavilion Oct. 17.

Lobe is an advocate for people with disabilities for the city of Astoria, sharing her unique perspective about how city streets and parking can be accessible to everyone. She has relied on her scooter to get around in recent years, as the polio she got in 1952 began to impact her ability to walk long distances. She has lived in Astoria for 30 years, and was a counselor at Astoria High School for more than 20 years before retiring. She and her husband, therapist Bob Lobe, live in Cullaby Lake.

Lobe thinks women with disabilities face extraordinary challenges when it comes to taking care of their health. She's hoping many women in the area will take advantage of an upcoming event specifically targeted to helping these women prevent and detect breast cancer.

The Right to Know Campaign is a national effort to promote breast health awareness among women with disabilities. On Oct. 17, Astoria will host a free all-day event called "Embracing Breast Health," to kick-off the educational campaign for local women over 40.

Nancy Magathan is an RN at Columbia Memorial Hospital who runs its North Coast Breast Health Services. She said the intent of the event is to encourage women with disabilities to see their doctor for mammograms and preventive treatments.

Research has shown that women with disabilities are significantly less likely to have been screened for breast cancer within the recommended guidelines and are three times less likely to have had a mammogram within the past year than women in general, among women 45 and up. Over 20 percent of women in Oregon live with a disability.

But it's often hard for women with disabilities to manage the multiple health concerns on their plates, especially if they don't have support structures in place, Lobe said.

"The first challenge to overcome is knowing that you need to get a mammogram," she said. If a person isn't educated about what's at stake, that has to happen, she said.

And next is the logistical challenge of getting to the site.

"Should there be someone there to help them?" Lobe asked. Women with physical disabilities sometimes need help getting to a new place, especially. It can be embarrassing to arrive and find that the staff isn't prepared to accommodate a person's specific needs, ending in wasted time.

Finally, a person might not be willing to step outside of their familiar territory, she said.

"When you're physically challenged, you can feel very vulnerable."

Magathan said all of these concerns will be addressed at the event. She's made arrangements to have Dr. Truman Sasaki, a local surgeon who specializes in breast biopsies and lumpectomies, speak about the many technological advances made lately.

"Breast education should be known by all women," Sasaki said. One in every eight or nine women will get breast cancer, he added.

Physical exams help, Sasaki said, but all women really need mammograms or MRIs, which have close to an 85 percent accuracy rate.

"Women with physical disabilities have the same needs as anyone else," he said. Because they may be managing other health issues, they may need to hear that information in a more clear-cut way, Sasaki said. There will also be a question and answer period, a nutrition and exercise talk and a skin care demonstration. A family member or attendant may attend.

Magathan has arranged transportation to pick up the event participants, if they get in contact with her in the next few days.

"We're strongly suggesting that people register early," she said.

Christine Lolich of Coastal Family Health Center said the event will surely be a solid start for getting these women together and communicating with one another - possibly even forming a network. But there's still much work to be done, she added.

"I do think there are people in the community that still won't get the info," Lolich said. Some won't make it out of the house because they don't like being in groups with other people, for example. Others might not have heard about the event at all.

"We still have a ways to go," she said.

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