



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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## **Joy to Life assistance allows ADPH to continue serving women in their 40s who may have symptoms of breast cancer**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Thanks to a generous \$300,000 donation from the Joy to Life Foundation, the Alabama Department of Public Health can continue to fund breast cancer screenings through June 30, 2012, for underserved women ages 40-49 with symptoms of breast cancer.

“Our funds are limited, and the demand for services has been high,” said Dr. Donald Williamson, state health officer. “We appreciate Joy to Life for its help in providing private funding to screen women in their 40s who have symptoms of breast cancer. Were it not for their donations, we would have been forced to suspend services for these women until the next funding year.”

The Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program of the Alabama Department of Public Health, funded through grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seeks to detect breast and cervical cancers at their earliest stages and thus reduce the mortality rate from these diseases. As many as 42 breast cancers are expected to be diagnosed as a result of this assistance.

Last year alone more than 110 medically underserved women were diagnosed with breast and cervical cancer through the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, and more than 1,900 women have been diagnosed since this program began in 1996.

Early detection of these cancers saves lives. Breast cancer screening services include clinical breast examinations and mammograms. Cervical cancer screening services include pelvic exams and Pap smears. If an abnormality is detected, diagnostic testing for both cancers may include an ultrasound, biopsy or colposcopy.

To be eligible for screening, the individual must be female, have an income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, and have no insurance or be underinsured. In addition, the patient must be age 50-64 with or without symptoms or age 40-49 with symptoms. Symptoms include a lump or mass, dimpling, or other changes in the breast.

Aside from provision of new funds, Joy to Life has been providing funding for mammograms to women under 50 years of age since 2001.

Program services are provided statewide by more than 400 contracted physicians, surgeons, radiologists and facilities committed to providing services to underserved women. These providers agree to accept a reduced rate for their services, and also agree to submit required data regarding services they provide for submission to the CDC.

Joy and Richard Blondheim of Montgomery founded Joy to Life in 2001. Mrs. Blondheim is a breast cancer survivor and the Blondheims have dedicated their time and efforts to women who are fighting to win the battle against breast cancer. After extensive research, the Blondheims formed a partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program to provide mammograms to women less than 50 years of age who do not have private insurance and cannot afford mammograms.

To find out whether you, a family member or friend qualify for the ABCCED Program, call 1-877-252-3324 toll free.

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