

“Ahrens Foundation joins breast cancer education tour”

Educating people – and particularly young women about breast health and breast cancer is the focus of the “Komen on the Go” tour which was in Grinnell Monday as part of its ten states, 44-stop 2006 tour.

The tour visited the Grinnell College campus, as well as the campuses of Central College, the University of Iowa and the University of Northern Iowa, courtesy of The Claude W. & Dolly Ahrens Foundation – a partner to the LIFE (LPGA Pros in the Fight to Eradicate Breast Cancer) pro-am event which raises money to support the initiative.

In addition to the Ahrens Foundation, which is based in Grinnell, other LIFE partners include Commerce Bank, Merrill Lynch, Johnson & Johnson, Guy Carpenter, QualCare Inc. and Roche Laboratories.

The tour is a mobile, interactive learning center-housed in a signature pink trailer-designed to raise awareness about breast cancer and its risks, and the benefits of early detection.

It is also designed to educate particularly young women about practical habits that can save lives. At its Grinnell College stop Monday, more than 150 individuals took a computer tutorial on how to perform breast self exams- a simple early detection procedure which women are urged to perform monthly to be their own front line in early detection efforts.

Women should have their health care provider check their breasts at least every three years starting at the age of 20, and yearly after the age of 40. It is also recommended that most women get mammograms yearly starting at age 40.

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, sponsor of the educational tour, was established in 1982 by Nancy Goodman Brinker to honor the memory of her sister, Susan Goodman Komen, who died from breast cancer at the age of 36. Earlier this year, the Komen Foundation awarded more than \$54.8 million to breast cancer research.

The Komen on the Go Tour is made possible with funds from the Val Skinner Foundation, which coordinates the annual LIFE event featuring the world’s most elite women golfers to raise money and awareness for breast cancer. Skinner, a six-time LGPA winner, started raising money for the cure after her dear friend and fellow LGPA golfer Heather Farr died of breast cancer at the age of 28.

Since that time, Skinner has dedicated herself to raising money and awareness in the fight against breast cancer. She and the Komen Foundation co-conceptualized the idea of the

young women's breast cancer initiative as a mobile tour, and hit the road in 2004. The pilot year, the tour visited ten universities. It has since been expanded to include all age groups, and more than four times that many stops.

Skinner was in Grinnell with the tour Monday, signing autographs for golf fans but mostly bringing her passion for her chosen cause-and thanks for the role the Ahrens Foundation is playing in this year's tour.

"It takes the kind of support provided by the Ahrens Foundation-people who see the big picture," Skinner said. "Their support, while important here in Iowa, is a big part of this national effort."

Skinner called the tour a passionate, proactive and responsible way to send a message to people where they live: to give them information they need, and to teach them about the resources available to them and ways they can get involved-and stay involved.

"We're connecting with a young audience in a way that they won't walk away today with the same attitude they had about breast cancer before," she said.

"I've lost three friends under the age of 35 to breast cancer," she added. "There are lots of good reasons to be here."

In addition to the tutorial on breast self-exam, the eight computers on the bus are also programmed to educate people on being a "co-survivor," or supporting someone they love who has breast cancer and to help them send a message to congressional representatives asking them to become champions for the cure, too.

The 2006 Komen on the Go Tour will also stop at locations-mainly colleges and universities but also shopping centers and other public areas-in California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon and Utah.

In addition, to funding the Komen on the Go Tour, the annual LIFE golf event also goes to fund the comprehensive Cancer Institute of New Jersey. To date, the LIFE event has raised over \$4 million to fund those two organizations in the fight against breast cancer.

Julie Gosselink and Susie Witt president and co-president of the Ahrens Foundation see their sponsorship as an opportunity to bring this unique and important educational event to Iowa and "hopefully benefits thousands of people" nationwide.

Younger women may think they are "invincible" and not at-risk for breast cancer- and yet they are. Correcting that misinformation, and providing useful information which could prove life-saving, is an important educational function, Ahrens Foundation representatives noted. They also say their sponsorship of the initiative is an extension of the foundation's work in supporting youth, health, and educational efforts.

The Ahrens Foundation has supported Grinnell Regional Medical Center in the past, and Gosselink and Witt said they are happy that representatives of GRMC were on hand at the event all day Monday-reinforcing the medical center's role as a health resource in the minds of students and others.

Ultimately, as Gosselink says breast cancer "is a disease that affects all of us in one way or another." As the Komen Foundation was founded in memory of a sister, and the Val Skinner Foundation was founded in memory of a friend, representatives of the Ahrens family foundation also take their support of this effort personally: Dolly Ahrens, wife of Claude and grandmother of Gosselink and Witt, was a breast cancer victim.

Breast cancer facts from Komen

*Silence is breast cancer's greatest ally.

*One in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime.

*No one knows what causes breast cancer. No one knows how to prevent it. What we do know is that if breast cancer is found and treated early, women have a better chance of surviving it.

*Every woman is at risk for breast cancer.

*Young women can and do get breast cancer, even in the 20's and sometimes younger.

*This year in the U.S. alone 10,000 young women under 40 will be told they have breast cancer. Of these, about 1,000 will be between 20-30 years old.

*Over 250,000 women under 40 are living with breast cancer. Many of these women found out they had cancer while they were in their 20's.