

# SUCCESS STORIES

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## Cancer Coalition of South Georgia studies the needs of area cancer survivors

### SUMMARY

Cancer Coalition of South Georgia conducted a needs assessment project devoted to area cancer survivors. Needs of cancer survivors were explored through various formats including surveys, focus groups, and a unique photography initiative that allowed survivors to share their personal stories through pictures. The photography project allowed cancer survivors to express their feelings, experiences, and needs visually. All data collected will be used to design future programs to improve the quality of life of those coping with cancer.



### YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

#### Survivors:

**Get connected to the Cancer Coalition. Add your name to the survivorship database to stay up to date with projects and programs designed to benefit you.**

#### Healthcare Providers:

**Learn the concerns of survivors as reflected in the needs assessment data collected. Join the conversation as we search for solutions to improve quality of life for survivors.**

#### Community Members:

**Be a volunteer for upcoming efforts.**

### CHALLENGE

The number of cancer survivors in Georgia is increasing due to advances in technology, treatment, and early detection to name a few factors. This population faces unique day to day challenges. The Georgia Department of Public Health expressed an interest in improving the quality of life for all cancer survivors. This interest aligns with the state cancer plan's survivorship objectives.

The Cancer Coalition has a great deal of data regarding cancer prevention and early detection needs. However survivorship data is limited. Useful relevant data regarding cancer survivorship was needed. Therefore, the purpose of our project was to gain knowledge of challenges as identified by survivors utilizing mixed methods of data collection.

"Taking the pictures has been therapeutic for me. The more I capture pictures and look at them, the stronger my will to live and continue my fight grows. This encourages me to fight the fight no matter how I'm feeling."

- Angela King, Breast Cancer Survivor

*Pictured above: A local cancer survivor and caregiver strike a pose during the Photo Voice Reception Gallery.*



Survivors, caregivers, and friends, enjoy refreshments during the Photo Voice Gallery.

## SOLUTION

During the 2014 fiscal year, a variety of cancer survivors were called upon to provide firsthand accounts of their experience with cancer. Trained facilitators conducted focus groups and photo voice sessions in order to collect the useful and unique information. The qualitative data provided necessary details and beneficial survivorship stories often neglected in traditional surveys. By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, a thorough survivorship summary data report was drafted.

## RESULTS

- 15 Cancer Survivors participated in 3 Lowndes County Focus Groups
  - 1 men's group and 2 women's groups were held
  - Key themes included need for navigation (point of diagnosis to treatment), need for simple education on cancer topics, need for resources (financial, educational, psychosocial, etc.)
- 3 Cancer Survivors participated in the photo voice project
  - Approximately 40 individuals attended the photo voice reception at the Cotton Corner Event space in Valdosta, GA on 5/22/14
- 65 Cancer Survivors completed needs assessment surveys
  - Areas of concern identified included health insurance, financial concerns, fear of reoccurrence, sexual issues, weight change, and numbness/tingling in hands and feet

## Contact



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## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future efforts will focus on narrowing identified service gaps that exist for cancer survivors. The following steps will be taken:

- Create one page summary handout featuring key points from needs assessment to disseminate to stakeholders (healthcare providers, public health officials, survivors, policymakers etc.)
- Use organization website and social media as platform for sharing information captured in assessment
- Implement strategic planning
- Implement sustainability planning
- Share resource list for cancer survivors on organization website
- Conduct ongoing data collection, assessment, and review to understand local survivorship issues.

The Cancer Coalition is excited to build upon the needs assessment data collected as we strive to improve the life of South Georgia Cancer survivors. The photo voice project was popular and well received by survivors, community members, and healthcare professionals. We look forward to integrating this project into future survivorship efforts.