

## AZ Giving Spotlight: The Coalition of Blacks Against Breast Cancer

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**As one of the only organizations that specifically targets those of African descent, The Coalition of Blacks Against Breast Cancer helps those dealing with the struggles of cancer. This organization aims to create awareness and educate African American cancer victims of proper health care. Arizona Foothills Magazine interviews co-founder, Marion Kelly.**



**AFM: Why did you decide to create this organization?**

MK: Dr. Halyard, a Mayo Clinic colleague and I began talking about the lack of high quality, reliable information within a safe and supportive environment to talk about breast cancer and its impact on the black community. So, we decided to create an organization designed for black breast cancer survivors (defined as anyone who has breast cancer from the time of diagnosis through their lifetime) within the Phoenix Metropolitan area to educate the black community about breast cancer prevention, diagnosis, and screening.

**AFM: Do you have any personal experiences that caused you to create it?**

MK: While I am not a clinician, I work at the Mayo Clinic, and see many patients come through our breast clinic which is on the very floor that my office resides. But even more close to home, I have multiple family members succumb to cancer in general. Most recently my maternal Aunt Val, her daughter and my 1<sup>st</sup> cousin Terri were diagnosed and treated. My aunt had a reoccurrence but is well after treatment again. Finally, her other daughter and also my 1<sup>st</sup> cousin Dee died of breast cancer after a valiant fight. She unfortunately lost her battle a couple of years ago.

**AFM: What is the most important aspect of your organization?**

MK: The most important aspect of the Coalition of Blacks Against Breast Cancer (CBBC) organization is the time that we spend on each 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the month at the Wellness Community sharing our stories, and then taking those shared stories into the black community to provide educational outreach of the importance of screening, the more aggressive form of breast cancer that tends to follow patients of African descent, and the higher mortality rate as a result of being diagnosed with the disease, for multiple reasons.

**AFM: What can the community do to help?**

MK: The most important thing that those who are from the Black community can do is to be screened. Early detection is the key to treating this devastating disease. The broader community needs to be aware of the CBBC organization in order to refer individuals who are from the Black to us. The CBBC is open to anyone that chooses to join, both breast cancer survivors, care givers, family members or supporters.

**AFM: What do you hope to see in this organization's future?**

MK: We found a very promising and effective means to educate through theatre. September 7<sup>th</sup> 2013 the CBBC put on a production: "The Journey-Living Cancer Out Loud". The reviews from those that attended were that we need to do more of this kind of outreach and to a broader community. However, it is costly. We need finances to continue this work in the community.

For more information, click [here](#).