

Troy ovarian cancer survivor's story to be documented at Rochester Hills awareness event



The Village of Rochester Hills is hosting Turn the Village Teal Saturday, Sept. 20, for ovarian cancer awareness. Photo courtesy of the Village of Rochester Hills

When the color teal becomes synonymous with ovarian cancer in the same way pink has become so readily associated with breast cancer awareness, survivors like [Deanna Cosens of Troy](#) will know they have made a difference.

With the color recognition, too, it's hoped women will stop ignoring the symptoms of the cancer, often passed off as another ailment.

"Everyone knows pink," Cosens said. "I know what a big disease breast cancer is and how many people it affects. (Ovarian cancer) is such a surprise."

We're trying to get the same response from a teal ribbon."

Cosens recently shared her story with award-winning film producer [Keith Famie](#), who will be shadowing her for an upcoming documentary during this weekend's [Turn the Village Teal awareness event at the Village of Rochester Hills](#).

"She wanted to get her story out so people understand," he said. "She wasn't ignoring it. ... She knows what (awareness) can do for other women."

Famie is producing the 13-part series "[The Embrace of Aging](#)," which is set to air on Detroit Public Television Oct. 12. The production is nearly complete, but Famie felt compelled to add Cosens' story to the film.

"([Turn the Village Teal](#)) will add the camaraderie element between patients and survivors," he said. "This is a necessity. It wouldn't be right to do this series without (it)."

Ovarian cancer can be difficult to detect, event organizers say, because there is no test designed specifically to diagnose that type of cancer. Symptoms can include bloating, pelvic abdominal pain, difficulty eating and urinary issues, according to the [Michigan Ovarian Cancer Awareness Alliance](#).

"We want the world to know the signs and symptoms," Cosens said.

Cosens was diagnosed in 2011 after doctors misdiagnosed her symptoms, such as bloating, which was attributed to post-menopausal weight gain. Most women, like Cosens was, are diagnosed in the late stages of [ovarian cancer](#), she said.

Cosens has had two recurrences of her cancer and had surgery in March and April to remove lymph nodes.

“I have my good days and bad,” she said. “There’s a lot of worry.”

September is National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, where tying teal-colored ribbons would typically suffice. However, Village of Rochester Hills marketing director Shelleen McHale wanted to take it a step further when she launched the event two years ago.

Turn the Village Teal now features a classic car show of turquoise and teal cars, live entertainment, activities for children, raffles as well as shopping and dining.

“When they initially came to me, they wanted to set up tents and pass out info,” McHale said. “We wanted to do more than that.”

The event is also personal for fellow organizer Michelle Shores, who lost her mother to ovarian cancer in 2011. She lived for five years following her diagnosis in 2006.

“It was a battle for her and all these women who get diagnosed in the late stages,” she said. “The stories go on and on.”

Awareness events like Turn the Village Teal will help Michigan get up to speed with ovarian cancer diagnoses and treatment, Shores said.