



The Ann Arbor
Independent
There's nothing more valuable than knowledge.

A locally owned weekly newspaper

HOME ARTS & LEISURE COLUMNS ECON EDU ENVIRO GOV HEALTH/SCIENCE NEWS OPINION

REGISTER A2INDY NOV. 2014 VOTER GUIDE HOME DELIVERY DIGITAL SUBS. NEWSSTAND LOCATIONS ABOUT CONTACT US ADVERTISE

Oct. 26 PBS “Embrace of Aging” Episode Features Former Ann Arbor Mayor Ingrid Sheldon’s Battle With Breast Cancer

INGRID SHELDON, IN her 70s, is small of stature but has a reputation that looms large in the city’s political story. A Republican, Ingrid (as she is ubiquitously known) is tied with Lou Belcher as being the longest-serving Republican mayor in the city’s history. She served from 1993-2000. In 1996 and 1998, Sheldon beat back challenges from Democratic City Council member Chris Kolb. In 2000, she decided not to seek office again.

It’s 2014 and Ingrid is once again in an important race and winning—she’s beating back an aggressive form of breast cancer. On Oct. 26 PBS will air Ingrid Sheldon’s story.

“Part of [aging with attitude] is looking in the mirror and seeing who you really are and not who you once were or who you think you are, then taking some positive actions to make the second half of your life richer and fuller,” said French author Mireille Guiliano about aging. That sentiment and perspectives from other women across the country and internationally is the focus of a thirteen-part series that began airing on Detroit Public Television on October 12.

Ten-time Emmy award-winning documentary filmmaker, director/producer Keith Famie will premiere his second film in The Embrace of Aging series, “The Embrace of Aging: The Female Perspective of Growing Old.”

Famie and his team at Visionalist Entertainment Productions combined great minds of medicine and science with touching, human-interest stories of real life circumstances all designed to help women understand and embrace the aging process.

“The Embrace of Aging” captures the lives of women from the countryside of Provence, France to the small villages of Okinawa, Japan and from the mountaintops in Jackson Hole, Wyo. to the bedsides of breast cancer patients.

Sheldon is one such patient.

“When I was asked to do the film,” she said, “I looked at it as a public service. “Being public about this hasn’t been hard,” she added. “I have, through this film, run into so many women who have had breast cancer.”

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and Sheldon is out there pitching prevention: “Make sure you have your regular mammogram. Keep on top of your health,” said Sheldon. When asked if she’d skipped her own mammogram she says, “No. Well, maybe I went 15 months between mammograms.”

There's a new screening test that, when used in conjunction with a mammogram, provides a much more definitive diagnosis, according to its inventors at Eventus Diagnostics, Inc. (EventusDx).

Registered in the United States, with its R&D center in Jerusalem, Eventus develops blood tests that measure cancer-specific autoantibodies present in people with cancer.

The Octava Pink test is appropriate for women whose mammogram comes back "negative-for-cancer" but whose physicians seek confirmation. In clinical trials at top hospitals in Israel, the U.S. and Italy the Octavia Pink test "was 97 percent accurate in informing a patient she doesn't have breast cancer," according to Dr. Marvin Rosenberg, the company's co-founder and president.

Although researchers around the world are working on blood tests to diagnose cancers, "most companies are working on the basis of genetics," Rosenberg said. "We believe we are the only ones who have developed a diagnostic test based on the immune system's response to specific cancers."

Following eight years of research and development, the test is now available to consumers and their physicians in Israel and Italy, and will soon be marketed in Europe and Asia. The company hopes to win approval for the test from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration within three to five years for the test to be part of breast cancer screening; approval would depend on the outcome of advanced clinical trials already in the works.

In March, Ingrid Sheldon was told she had an aggressive form of cancer that was classified as stage 3. Stage 3 cancer means the breast cancer has extended to beyond the immediate region of the tumor and may have invaded nearby lymph nodes and muscles, but has not spread to distant organs. It is considered an advanced stage of the disease.

When asked if she was frightened when she received the diagnosis, Ingrid said, "I was scared but I knew I had to face it. You have to deal with it. When I started losing my hair, I had the 'Gramma's Hair Off.'" The event, held at her son's house, allowed Sheldon to be with her family while her daughter-in-law sheered her mother-in-law's head.

"My grandson held my hand and I got \$1 for being good during the haircut," said Sheldon with a chuckle.

It was coming to grips with her missing breast that Ingrid says "was tough." She credits her husband of 48 years, Cliff, as helping her through that part of her treatment.

Sheldon said: "Cliff had the first look. They were changing the dressing. He said, 'You can look now, Ingrid. It's ok.'"

One of the themes which Ingrid Sheldon repeats throughout our 35 minutes chat is the support of her family.

"I have an amazing support system, my husband, my family. Cliff has been involved every step of the way. Not all women are that lucky," she said.

Ingrid also praises documentary filmmaker, director/producer Keith Famie. The documentarian followed Sheldon to doctor's appointments and recorded her ups and downs as she went from diagnosis to remission in the space of a seven month period. "It a great series," she says, "and I hope it helps people who see it."

When Ingrid talks about the toughest aspect of making the film she says it was hardest "trying to be candid during filming. You want what you say to be meaningful to those who watch it."

According to the National Institute, approximately 12.3 percent of women will be diagnosed with breast cancer at some point during their lifetime. In 2011, there were an estimated 2,899,726 women living with breast cancer in the United States. The five year survival rate is 89.2 percent. In 1991, 43,583 women died from breast cancer; the overall death rate was 27.0 per 100,000 women.

Non-Hispanic white women in the U.S. have an incidence rate of 125.4 cases per 100,000, the highest of all races and ethnicities, and a mortality rate of 23.9 per 100,000, the second highest of all races and ethnicities.

In answer to a question about whether she intends to have reconstructive surgery, Sheldon says she has no plans to do so.

"I know for other woman reconstructive surgery can help them," she says. She adds with a laugh: "Me? I get up, pop the falsie into my bra and I'm done."

At the end of our conversation, Ingrid does not object to answering a few questions about politics.

What about the AAPS proposal to annex the Whitmore Lake Public School district?
"I support it, but I don't think it will pass."

The re-election of Gov. Rick Snyder?

"Snyder will probably pull it off. I feel badly that he has to work with such an 'interesting' group in the Legislature."

She goes on to talk about a Republican Party that has left her behind.

"I'm a social progressive and a fiscal conservative," says Sheldon. "The GOP left Republicans like me behind."

As for the biggest challenge facing Ann Arbor's next mayor, Ingrid Sheldon takes a moment to consider then says: "The city's fiscal health is in order, but the most important issue is the issue of growth and how you manage it. That's the most important challenge facing the next mayor. How do you keep from alienating people?"

Sheldon is the President of the Ann Arbor Thrift Shop and talks about the importance of facing down cancer through having a positive attitude and keeping busy.

Ingrid says, "You have to keep life in perspective. It's important not to let the disease take over you. You do it through your attitude."