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Ovarian Cancer Awareness Major Focus of New Task Force

Five Colorado Non-Profits Working Together to Promote Early Detection, Research, Outreach and Support Services

The Colorado Ovarian Cancer Alliance, the Cheryl Shackelford Foundation, the Kathleen Bennett Foundation of Hope for Ovarian Cancer, the Sue DiNapoli Ovarian Cancer Foundation and the HERA Women's Cancer Foundation have formed a new consortium – The Ovarian Cancer Task Force (OCTF). Their goal is to save women's lives by supporting the efforts of partner groups to raise awareness of ovarian cancer through education including the promotion of early detection, as well as research, outreach, support services and other means.

The new task force is part of the Colorado Cancer Coalition (CCC) and will be led by Guadalupe (Pep) Torres, Colorado Ovarian Cancer Alliance (COCA) Executive Director. "In developing COCA's strategic plan, one of the goals was to work more closely and better support all ovarian cancer groups in Colorado," said Torres. "We invited each group to the table and they all showed up, ready and willing to roll up their sleeves. Our bottom line is the same - raise awareness and save lives! By working together we hope to have great impact in Colorado and in the lives of women fighting this disease. "

Every 40 hours one woman in Colorado dies from ovarian cancer.

"The Sue DiNapoli Ovarian Cancer Foundation is honored to represent Southern Colorado on the Ovarian Cancer Task Force," says Susan DiNapoli McLain, the proud daughter of Sue DiNapoli. "We are looking forward to a new level of awareness toward this devastating disease that encompasses the entire state of Colorado. We strongly believe that every woman deserves her best chance of survival regardless of her economic situation. Joining forces with these esteemed groups will help us reach more Colorado women who may require our assistance."

Ovarian cancer is the fifth most common cancer in females in the United States but it is the most common cause of death among women who develop gynecologic cancer. The American Cancer Society estimates that nearly 22,000 women in the United States will receive a new diagnosis of ovarian cancer in 2011 and more than 15,000 women will die from the disease.

"The HERA Women's Cancer Foundation is pleased to be collaborating with the leading ovarian cancer organizations in Metro Denver," says Meg J. Steitz, HERA Women's Cancer Foundation Executive Director. "While we are all committed to raising awareness about the symptoms of the disease, we

each have a slightly different mission. This collaboration is an exciting venture to combine efforts to stop the loss of women to ovarian cancer. I am delighted to be working with such outstanding colleagues towards a common goal.”

In their organization’s mission statement, each of the OCTF members stresses the importance of raising awareness. They know that deaths can be prevented by greater recognition of ovarian cancer symptoms and earlier diagnosis. If the disease is found in an early stage, up to 90 percent of the women diagnosed with ovarian cancer will survive for more than five years. Unfortunately, 75 percent of diagnosed cases are in stage III/IV, when the disease has already spread beyond the ovaries.

“KBF looks forward to working with all of the other Task Force member groups to achieve our mission,” says Mike Kopcha of the Kathleen Bennett Foundation of Hope.

There is no screening test for ovarian cancer – and the Pap test does not check for ovarian cancer – so being able to recognize the symptoms is critical to saving lives. Symptoms of ovarian cancer include bloating, pelvic or abdominal pain, difficulty eating or feeling full quickly, and urinary urgency or frequency. Because the symptoms of early-stage ovarian cancer are often vague and may not be specific or severe, too often a woman does not seek medical attention promptly.

“My mother, Mary Housewright, lost her battle with ovarian cancer in 1989 so I was pleased to work with Cheryl Shackelford to educate women in Colorado on the signs, symptoms and risk factors of this disease,” says Carol Cisler, Cheryl Shackelford Foundation President. “It has been said, ‘knowledge is power’ and ‘there is strength in numbers’, so in Cheryl’s memory CSF joins with these other wonderful foundations in Colorado to bring early detection and treatment of ovarian cancer so important to the survival of a patient.”

According to Torres, the Task Force is already discussing plans for an Ovarian Cancer Summit in September 2012.

About the Ovarian Cancer Task Force Member Organizations:

The Colorado Ovarian Cancer Alliance

The mission of COCA is to promote awareness about ovarian cancer through advocacy, education and support. COCA’s goals are to advocate for women with ovarian cancer, and for ovarian cancer awareness, through participation in activities at the local, state and national levels; to educate women, families, doctors and health care providers about early detection of ovarian cancer through Survivors Teaching Students™ and COCA Speakers Bureau; and to support survivors through offering ongoing Nicki’s Circle Ovarian Cancer Support Groups. To learn more about COCA and its work, visit <http://www.colorado-ovariancancer.org>.

The Cheryl Shackelford Foundation

Cofounded by and named in honor of a 20-year survivor of ovarian cancer, CSF is committed to raising public awareness and educating women in the state of Colorado regarding the symptoms, risk factors and facts about ovarian cancer. CSF’s goals are to increase the rate of early detection of ovarian cancer

and assist those women diagnosed with the disease in a supportive role. To learn more about CSF and its work, visit www.csfovarian.org.

The Kathleen Bennett Foundation of Hope for Ovarian Cancer

Describing its mission as simple – to increase the number of lives saved from ovarian cancer through early detection – KBF intends to accomplish this by empowering women through education and awareness. KBF believes women must demand the diagnostic steps necessary to detect ovarian cancer in the early stages when there is an opportunity for effective treatment and cure. The Foundation of Hope's goals (10-10-10) are to eliminate ovarian cancer from the Top 10 Deadliest Women's Cancers; to reduce annual deaths due to ovarian cancer by 10,000 women per year; and to accomplish this within 10 years. To learn more about KBF and its work, visit www.kbfoundationofhope.org.

Sue DiNapoli Ovarian Cancer Foundation

Sue DiNapoli, a resident of El Paso County, enjoyed a life filled with family, friends, volunteer work and fun. With a contagious laugh and a remarkable spirit, her upbeat attitude and determination helped her battle ovarian cancer for more than 5-1/2 years. Proceeds of the Sue DiNapoli Ovarian Cancer Foundation help low income and under-insured women in the Pikes Peak area with screening and early detection of ovarian cancer. To learn more about the Foundation and its work, visit www.beovaryaware.org.

HERA Women's Cancer Foundation

The mission of the HERA Women's Cancer Foundation is to stop the loss of women from ovarian cancer by promoting **H**ealth, **E**mpowerment, **R**esearch, and **A**wareness. As a nationally-recognized non-profit ovarian cancer organization, HERA provides funding for cutting-edge research grants to scientists at respected medical institutions. The projects funded focus on mechanisms of ovarian cancer development, growth and treatment. HERA also embraces projects related to ovarian cancer awareness, empowering women through educational activities which raise awareness of symptoms and treatment options. By stressing the concept of "community", HERA supports women undergoing treatment for ovarian cancer as well as women who are healthy. To learn more about HERA and its work, visit www.herafoundation.org.