

Virginia McCandless' legacy

UK ovarian cancer project 40 years later

STAFF REPORT

A fundraising effort that began with an impassioned plea from one Extension Homemaker to her peers has positively impacted Kentucky women and the University of Kentucky for the past 40 years.

The late Virginia McCandless, a Barren County Extension Homemaker, and Dr. John van Nagell with the UK Markey Cancer Center started the ovarian cancer research fundraising effort in 1977. At the time, McCandless was state health chair for the Kentucky Extension Homemaker's Association and diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She approached Dr. van Nagell, her gynecologic oncologist, about ways to raise awareness about the cancer—often known as the “silent killer of women,”—and funds for UK's research program. Their goal was to raise \$1 from each member of KEHA, which then had 31,000 members. While in the final stages of her battle, McCandless approached her fellow homemakers with the idea at the association's state meeting.

Her idea took off. Today, members of the association continue to support the program, which became the ovarian cancer screening program in 1987, and have contributed more than \$1.4 million since the effort began. While their contribution varies each year, the state's more than 14,000 Extension Homemakers have given between

\$40,000 and \$50,000 each year for the past decade. Their donations help cover various expenses that come with running the program, including everything from equipment upgrades to unexpected repairs to the program's mobile screening unit.

“There's been a real commitment and a real feeling that they can make a difference if they target some of their efforts on fighting ovarian cancer,” said Kim Henken, the UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment's advisor to the association. “Their work really goes beyond fundraising. They participate in the screening program, which helps to further the research. They encourage the screening program, and they do local educational programs about ovarian cancer.”

Brenda Leftwich, a third-generation Extension Homemaker in Barren County, remembers McCandless from her childhood. She also had another friend who died from the disease. She encourages her friends to be screened and continues to raise funds for the effort.

“When my best friend and I turned 50, one of the things we promised each other was we would go for a screening,” she said. “To me, it was a no brainer because it is free.”

The screening is free to any woman who is over 50 or over 25 with a family history of ovarian cancer.



BARREN COUNTY HOMEMAKER Virginia McCandless, right, began Kentucky Extension Homemakers' project to combat ovarian cancer. She is shown with Dr. John van Nagell of the UK Markey Cancer Center in 1977.

For some members like Mason County Extension Homemaker Nadine Barker, the program means so much more. In 2004, Barker was diagnosed with a tumor on her ovary during a routine screening.

“I credit the screening with saving my life,” she said. “I have promoted it to a lot of people in my county as well as to my family.”

Research participants like Barker agree to an annual screening. The UK research program focuses on proving that ovarian cancer can be caught in an early stage when it is highly treatable.

“Right now, we have over 46,000 women in the study, and they come from every county in Kentucky,” said Dr. Ed Pavlik, director of the screen-

School Board continued from page 1

Beta winners were presented with certificates of appreciation by board member Carter Walden (for photos of the presentation, see the Citizen's Facebook page) and presented the board, in return, with a book chronicling their adventures.

Evaluation Information

Biggerstaff gave a PowerPoint presentation outlining Monroe County assessment results for 2017, and explaining what educators and parents can expect to find on the new “dashboard” that will give schools a snapshot of how they're doing. The previous rating system, in which test results were ranked as distinguished, proficient, apprentice or novice and aggregated to create school report cards, is being replaced by one that will measure a wider variety of indicators such as attendance and suspensions.

Under the old rating system, Gamaliel and Tompkinsville Elementary schools would have ranked Distinguished and Monroe County would have ranked as

an overall District of Distinction. “Believe me, we would have plastered that one everywhere,” said Biggerstaff with a wry grin.

Joe Harrison Carter gained 11.5 points to become a School of Distinction, the middle school saw improvements in novice reduction and in GAP (a statistic that measures any gaps in achievement between “typical” students who fit the dominant demographic and those of other ethnicities, other first languages, dealing with disabilities or economically disadvantaged.)

Tompkinsville saw gains in measures of both growth and achievement, Joe Harrison Carter big gains in all areas (“They just pulled kids in and worked with them very intensely,” noted Biggerstaff) and Gamaliel stayed in the low to mid 90s, one of the top 30 elementary schools in the state. “You can't argue with that kind of score,” Biggerstaff said.

Along with the new dashboard, assessment plans for the current school year are taking shape. “GAP is going to be a

huge part of the new system,” Biggerstaff said, “and we are going to work on that intensely.”

“Personally, I'm very proud of everyone,” said Superintendent of Schools Amy Thompson.

More instructional materials

In other business, the board awarded a budget increase of \$15 per student for instructional materials, a total expenditure of \$25,000. Board president Dr. Michael Carter questioned how the money might be used, saying at first that he thought there were enough Chromebooks already, but feedback from building principals indicated that the Chromebooks have become a vital tool of classroom instruction. “We don't use textbooks hardly at all; our instructional materials are coming from online sources,” said middle school principal Jon-Michael Clemmons. It was agreed that Thompson will survey teachers about their needs to determine the best use of the funds.

Cursive Writing

And not everything is web-based, or should be. “Parents have asked about cursive writing,” said trustee John Hardin. “Is there a push we could make to get back to that? People talk about students' signatures a lot.”

“This year's English/Language Arts draft curriculum was revised to add cursive, because the Commissioner of Education hears the same things,” said Biggerstaff. “They mandate cursive instruction in grades 2 and 3.” Efforts currently underway or being launched to get cursive writing back into the mainstream include journaling in cursive and emphasizing it in Practical Living courses.

Other business

Finally, the district needs to decide how best to use \$316,000 in state facilities funding that needs to be spent before the end of the year. New pavement and new lockers were identified as top facilities' needs. “If we're real selective, we can probably do some of both,” said facilities director Tommy Gerald.

Bullying continued from page 1

break, the wall came crashing down.

Joe's sister Sally, a year older, had spent the night with Grandma; when it looked the next morning as if she might miss the bus, Sally grew frantic. “If I can't get on the bus with Joe, I can't protect him.” Protect him from what? Grandma wanted to know.

A few minutes later they joined an exasperated Mary, who was about to punish Joe for screaming and carrying on for yet another morning. “Don't do that!” said Grandma, and finally some answers came spilling out.

For the past month, Joe had been tormented by two boys twice his size on the school bus every day. “Sally's a little heavy, and they'd call her ‘fat-ass’ and all kinds of stuff, then make Joe call her things, and if he didn't do it, they'd hit him. These boys are in eighth and ninth grade. They're six-footers and my son is barely three foot,” Mary explained.

“They told the kids that if they told anyone, they'd come to the elementary school and kill them and all their friends. They told them they'd kill me; mind you they just lost their daddy three years ago.”

That Wednesday, the violence had escalated into a serious assault. “He could hardly manage to bend over to tie his shoes,” says Mary. “They bruised his liver, his kidneys, his ribs. The doctor said they must have hit him really hard. He said, if the school

doesn't do anything, I do have the option of pressing assault charges.”

Mary knows the story of the ninth-grade boy who hurt her boy. “They say one of the boys is just a cruel child,” she says, “known for picking on others. He's just not had a very good childhood: dad locked up, mom's a drug user, the only person that tried to help is his grandma, and she passed. I can understand he's miserable, but I had a tough time and I didn't turn out like that, and my son didn't cause his life to be that way. The kids that go into school and open fire, this boy would put you in mind of that. He needs to be somewhere where they can help him get out of that mindset he is in.”

Her focus right now is on helping Joe heal and stay safe, whether that means rides to school or even home schooling while the district decides how to respond. “I don't know how long it will take him to feel safe going back to school,” she says. “I told him to never keep something like this from me no matter how bad he thinks it is; I'm with him every step of the way.”

“They questioned the boys, who denied it all; they say the cameras don't show anything. The school has always been great in the past, but I don't think they should have the teenagers and the little kids all on the bus together. Right now, I'm just a mess - don't know how to make this right for them, I'm crushed and furious and trying not to show the kids how upset I am. And

if they do nothing about this, I'm not gonna be remotely OK with that.”

Super Crossword

Answers

S	C	A	R	F	W	R	A	P	S	C	A	B	S	T	A	R	T		
T	O	N	A	L	H	A	S	I	T	O	D	E	A	R	R	O	W		
E	L	I	Z	A	B	E	T	H	T	A	Y	L	O	R	M	O	T	T	O
B	O	O	K	I	E	G	E	O	R	G	E	B	U	S	H				
H	E	N	R	Y	C	L	A	Y	Y	A	R	N	M	A	T	H	I	S	
I	R	I	S	P	O	T	E	T	A	O	R	O							
E	T	C	V	I	C	T	O	R	I	A	P	R	I	N	C	I	P	A	L
R	I	T	Z	I	N	T	O	L	A	H	R								
J	A	M	E	S	D	E	A	N	T	R	O	D	T	A	M	A	L	E	
I	D	I	N	A	C	L	O	C	H	E	I	T	E	R	A	T	E	S	
L	I	L	C	H	A	R	L	E	S	I	V	E	S	T	A	T			
T	E	L	E	C	A	S	T	A	L	T	M	A	N	S	P	I	C	E	
S	U	I	T	O	R	E	S	M	E	A	N	N	E	H	E	C	H	E	
A	L	M	A	L	O	A	N	E	X	I	T								
W	I	L	L	I	A	M	W	O	R	D	S	W	O	R	T	H	A	M	P
E	M	O	K	A	I	A	P	R	A	R	O	A	R	O					
S	M	U	D	G	E	L	A	S	T	M	A	R	Y	A	S	T	O	R	
E	D	W	A	R	D	L	E	A	R	A	O	R	T	I	C				
T	R	E	E	S	E	N	G	L	I	S	H	M	O	N	A	R	C	H	S
A	S	S	E	S	M	O	I	A	E	I	O	U	B	A	L	E	R		
G	E	T	B	Y	I	T	S	L	A	P	E	L	S	L	E	D	S		