

# Survivor Spotlight

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Lucille Latham



## ***Lucille in her own words...***

Lucille Latham first underwent breast cancer treatment in 1988. At that time, treatments were radical, options were few, and reconstructive surgery performed in Alabama was performed only in Birmingham. Also to her dismay, the public was uneducated about cancer. As a hairdresser, other people began to treat her differently than before. She had customers cancel their appointments because they feared they would get the disease.

When the cancer returned a second time in 1993, Lucille underwent extensive surgery in the areas under her arms. She was no longer able to work as a hairdresser, ending her 40-year career. "I was very frightened and in the depths of depression," she said. "I didn't know what to do."

Then, a friend asked her to cater a function on breast cancer awareness sponsored by the American Cancer Society. Lucille agreed. During the tea, she was asked to speak about her experiences. Unexpectedly, she opened up to express herself and found a new calling in life—to make other women aware that there is life after cancer.

Eight years ago, Judy Crowley, Director of Coffee County Family Services Center, hired Lucille for a position, which she still holds today at age 72. Ms. Latham says, "God has given me this time to make a difference; when the doors have opened, I always step through. This program is so meaningful; we must continue our pursuit." Through the efforts of Lucille and the Center, approximately 9,000 women have received breast cancer education.

In 2007, the Coffee County Family Service Center reported 256 women had abnormal findings on mammograms and that 24 breast cancer diagnoses were made. The Center works with programs such as the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, the Joy to Life Foundation, and the Komen Foundation to serve women with limited incomes and without health insurance.

Ms. Latham has also collaborated with the Avon Foundation and the Alabama Sheriff's Association to bring breast cancer awareness to incarcerated women, an audience that is often overlooked. This project is called the Butterfly Project and has been highly successful in Alabama and nationally.

Lucille and her colleagues also teach breast cancer awareness through a DVD titled "Breast Cancer Awareness." The video is available on the Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition website on the Special Projects page at [www.alabamacancercontrol.org/specialprojects.html](http://www.alabamacancercontrol.org/specialprojects.html).