

CENTER OF ATTENTION

In the Spotlight



WHEN EVANSVILLE Cancer Center Marketing Director Robin Broesch was diagnosed with skin cancer in March 2002 at the age of 42, she took aggressive moves to not only fight it, but to educate others about the severity of the disease and early detection. Because of her efforts, Broesch is featured in the December issue of *SHAPE* magazine in the article, “Women Who Shape the World.” The story profiles 10 women in the United States who’ve impacted their world and others’ by overcoming adversity and transforming themselves into advocates for women’s health.

SHAPE learned of Broesch through the American Academy of Dermatology,

whose physician-members selected her for the Gold Triangle Award for her work educating others about skin cancer.

“What I realized after I had been diagnosed was that as educated as I thought I was — and I was in health care marketing — there was very little awareness of skin cancer,” she says. “When I was diagnosed, I remember being paralyzed with fear, wondering how long I had to live. I knew enough to really scare me. Then I realized how lucky I was, because of early detection. I’ve been very lucky, but that is not always the case.”

Broesch was terrified to learn that melanoma is the fastest growing cancer of any type of cancer there is. And when she learned the incidence rate has increased

by 619 percent in a 50-year period — the next highest being liver cancer at 295 percent and lung cancer at 294 percent — she knew she wasn’t the only one who wasn’t aware of the disease’s severity. After her life-saving surgery, Broesch was declared cancer free, but she knew her fight wasn’t over. She wanted to inform others about early detection and preventative measures against skin cancer. Then she met Denita Wilson Majors, a 24-year-old mother of two from Morganfield, Ky. Majors was diagnosed with skin cancer in September 2003 and died two months later.

“That really hit me hard,” Broesch says. “She and I had sat down, and I interviewed her. I have a video of her that I show when I present to schools.

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“These kids, especially the kids who use tanning beds, do not realize the damage they are doing to themselves which could ultimately cost them their life. And it’s because of vanity and misguided information. The media has done a wonderful — and I mean that sarcastically — job of ingraining into our brains a tan is a sign of beauty and health.”

Armed with videos, first-hand experience, statistics, and a device called a Derma-Scan from Schering-Plough Pharmaceuticals, which shows the damage to a person’s face caused by ultraviolet radiation, Broesch has conducted more than 300 presentations about skin cancer to Evansville schools and universities. Broesch’s hope is that area children and students will take precautions now that will save them in the future.

Through the *SHAPE* article, Broesch hopes to extend her reach and spread the word to other young sun-seekers.

“I am very fortunate that Evansville Cancer Center has allowed me to make this my personal mission,” Broesch says. “Skin cancer is not really a part of our business here, but (Medical Director) Dr. Al Korbas says it’s not always about the money. It’s about what is the right thing to do. So what keeps me motivated is my own fear, realizing for the most part this is a very controllable cancer. But the key is education.”

Photos of Broesch were taken for the feature along the riverfront. Although she wasn’t a fan of the heavy make-up the *SHAPE* team applied, or the “Midwest farm-girl” outfit they dressed her in, she says it was a fun experience. But adds she’s still more comfortable behind a camera than in front of it.

—Beth Tompkins