

[Home Page](#)[Frederick County](#)[Montgomery County](#)[Prince George's County](#)[Carroll County](#)[Southern Maryland](#)**Gazette.Net****Legislative Times.com***The easy way to follow politics!*[Click Here](#)

[The President](#)
[Congress](#)
[The Supreme Court](#)
[The Campaigns](#)

SiteSearch

GO

[Advanced Search!](#)
[Archives](#)

NEWS by Community

Select One

Aspen Hill

Bethesda

SPORTS by Community

Select One

Aspen Hill

Bethesda

EASY FINDER

[Births](#)
[Columns](#)
[Editorials](#)
[Engagements](#)
[Letters](#)
[Movie Finder](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Police Reports](#)
[Restaurant Finder](#)
[Reunions](#)
[Weddings](#)

GAZETTE SECTIONS

[Business](#)
[Classifieds](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Local Calendars](#)
[Sports](#)

LOCAL NONPROFITS

[Frederick](#)
[Montgomery](#)
[Prince George's](#)

RELATED SITES

Battling breast cancer for all women

[E-Mail This Article](#)

by Terri Hogan
Staff Writer

Oct. 20, 2004

Judith Lese raising money,
awareness

Judith Lese has devoted much of her life to education, spending over 30 years as an elementary school teacher in Montgomery County.

When diagnosed with breast cancer in 2002, the Norwood Village resident took it upon herself to educate others about breast health and to raise money for research.

In June 2002, Lese, now 57, began to have soreness in her left breast.

"I did regular breast exams and had regular mammograms, so I was very responsible in doing what women are told to do as they get older and their bodies



J. Adam Fenster/The Gazette

Judith Lese of the Norwood Village community of Silver Spring turned her own treatment for breast cancer into a

[The Bowie Star](#)
[The Business Gazette](#)
[DCMilitary.com](#)
[Weekend Edition](#)

THE GAZETTE

[About Us](#)
[Advertising Info](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Employment](#)
[Photo Reprints](#)
[Newspaper Locator](#)

change," she said.

In July of that year, she threw herself a big birthday party to celebrate her 55th birthday. Over the next few weeks the discomfort continued, sometimes resulting in excruciating pain.

"If it had been in my arm, I would have thought I was having a heart attack," she said.

Lese called her doctor and said the medical professionals were not alarmed because she told them there was no lump, but she scheduled an appointment for Sept. 10, a day she had no school.

When she began having trouble breathing and experiencing a tightening in her chest, she said she thought there was something seriously wrong with her.

When her doctor examined her and found no lump, he told her she might be experiencing a muscular-skeletal condition known as costalchondritis, and prescribed vitamin E and Advil.

He gave her a prescription for her mammogram, which she would have regularly scheduled for October. He told her she could either go then, or wait until October.

foundation that is raising thousands of dollars for research and awareness.

"I figured if the doctors weren't worried, I shouldn't be worried," she said.

She called for her mammogram and the first available appointment was three weeks later.

On Oct. 8, 2002, she went for the mammogram, and said it was immediately very clear that she had a mass in her left breast.

"Since I never had a lump, no one thought along those lines," she said. "Of course, that doesn't mean that every pain or soreness is cancer, either."

Lese said she wishes she had known that breast pain could have been a warning sign because she would have reacted differently.

Lese saw a breast surgeon the following day, and made plans to have a lumpectomy to remove the Grade 3, highly aggressive tumor.

"The doctor said that the pain was caused by the tumor pulling on the tissue, and was not surprised at the amount of pain I was in," she said. "She said lumps are caused by scar tissue, and since it was growing so fast it didn't have time to make the scar tissue. It had probably been growing since April.

"I asked her right then if I had to be dead to have a foundation, because I knew that I wanted to help others take better care of themselves," she added.

As she began her treatment for a life-threatening disease, she conceptualized the Judith A. Lese Breast Cancer Foundation.

She had the lumpectomy on Oct. 17 at the Sibley Center for Breast Health and was assigned a team of medical professionals, including a radiologist and an oncologist.

She had four cycles of chemotherapy, followed by two months of radiation.

"It was hard," Lese admitted. "I lost my hair and got very, very sick."

She scheduled her chemotherapy for Fridays so she would have time to recover over the weekend before returning to her second-grade classroom at Cannon Road Elementary School.

The Sibley Center for Breast Health had just opened, and Lese said she felt so fortunate to be cared for by the dedicated specialists.

"I encourage everyone to get their care there, because they are truly committed to breast health," she said.

During her treatment period, Lese said she continued to develop her foundation in her mind. She recalled the birthday party she had in July, and decided she would turn that into a fundraising dinner the following year.

Her motivation was getting the word out to as many women as she could about better breast health -- and saving lives.

"I've been teaching, organizing and running things all my life; education comes first to me," she said. "There was a need to get this message out, and I was going to find a way to do it."

Lese said she wanted to remain a

Advertisement

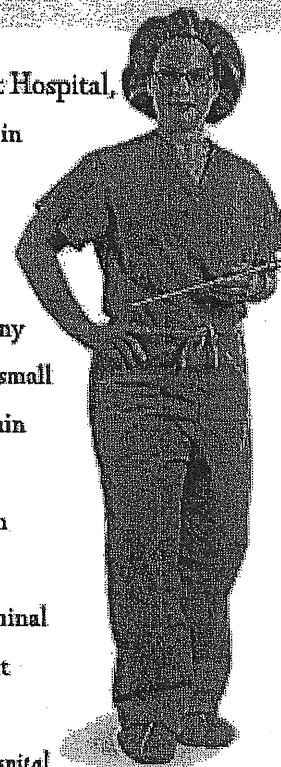
"With our high-tech advances,
MAJOR SURGERY
doesn't feel SO MAJOR at all."

Kristin Estelle, R.N., Vascular Surgery Nurse
Shady Grove Adventist Hospital

"At Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, some of our biggest advances in surgery are quite small. For example, we use endoscopic telescopes for minimally invasive procedures. These tiny video cameras require a very small incision, so you'll have less pain and heal faster.

"Our vascular surgeons can also use this advancement to repair life-threatening abdominal aortic aneurysms, making just two small incisions.

"Remember: this is your hospital. When it comes to your care, no advancement is too big. Or too small."



 **Shady Grove**
Adventist Hospital

grassroots organization, as not to compete with the national organizations.

"I wanted to help those who helped me, such as the Sibley Center for Breast Health," she said.

With the help of her doctors, she created a Medical Advisory Council to serve on her foundation consisting of Dr. Irene Gage, chair of radiation oncology at Sibley Memorial Hospital Cancer Center; Dr. Collette Magnant, a breast surgeon; Dr. Frederick Smith, a medical oncologist; and Dr. Rebecca Zuurbier, chief of breast imaging at Sibley Center.

"These doctors are very committed, and they have helped me direct funds to cancer research," she said.

In June 2003, The Judith A. Lese Breast Cancer Foundation was officially incorporated, and the following month the first annual fundraising dinner took place.

The mission of the foundation is to raise money for the Sibley Center for Breast Health, to contribute funds toward medical research in the quest to find a cure for breast cancer, and to promote education that enables women to be better equipped to advocate with accurate information.

In addition to the dinner, the foundation held its first 5-kilometer walk at Brookside Gardens in Wheaton, a high tea and "An Evening of Wellness," and organized a group to attend the annual Breast Health Seminar at Sibley Center.

In its first year, Lese's foundation was able to donate \$15,500 to Sibley Center for Breast Health for the purchase of a breast magnetic resonance biopsy device.

"They are the only center in the area that has this diagnostic tool," Lese said. "Before, they had to send their patients to the University of Pennsylvania for this."

In addition, Lese presented a \$500 donation to genetic researcher Nancy Davidson at the Sydney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University.

Lese said she is determined to get the money raised by the foundation into the hands of those who will make a difference.

"I feel that I benefited from the research and received the best care possible, she said.

"I just want to help save lives, and as long as I am alive, my mission is to do whatever I can to save others. I can't do what these medical professionals are doing, but I can help them financially."

The foundation is now into its second year. Another fundraising dinner was held this past July and the second annual 5K Walk to Win is scheduled for this weekend.

Lese said her prognosis is good, and she intends to devote her time to her husband Larry and their three sons, continue teaching and work towards the foundation's growth.

"If the cancer recurs, I will do whatever is available to help me survive," she said. "I am very energetic, strong and determined, so while I am doing it, I will continue to do whatever I can to help keep others alive."

[Frederick County](#) | [Montgomery County](#) | [Carroll County](#) | [Prince George's County](#)
[CALENDARS](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [ENTERTAINMENT](#) | [CLASSIFIEDS](#) | [DIRECTORIES](#)
Copyright © 2004 The Gazette - ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. [Privacy Statement](#)

Breast Cancer Treatment

Fight breast cancer with info on symptoms, treatments, and resources

Natl Breast Cancer Fd.

Premier site for breast cancer info Give today to help poor women in US

Ads by Goooooogle