LET'S MAKE PINK
JUST A COLOR



Women in Business Conference, Crystal Coast

October 6, 2026

Presented by Brittany Suplicki, Secretary

This story starts with one woman.

In June 2023, at 35 years old and with no prior medical history, Brittany Kelley was diagnosed with stage 3 triple negative breast cancer. She spent months in chemotherapy, then had a double mastectomy.

In the middle of her own treatment, she started Let’s Make Pink Just a Color right here in Carteret County, so no neighbor facing this disease would have to carry it alone.
She didn’t want to build just a race. She wanted to build a movement, something that reminded people going through it that they weren’t alone.



Brittany, race day.



Founder, Let's Make Pink Just a Color

She worked on this race until the day she passed.

Brittany was a wife to Grant and a mother to three boys, Cormick, Maverick, and Hendrick. She passed away on September 28, 2025. Right up until then, she was still hands on with this race, the one you're hearing about today.

That's how much this event meant to her. So when we talk about October 18th, we're not just promoting a 5K. We're carrying forward the thing she loved most.
Her name and her heart are in everything this organization does.

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Hear it from Brittany.

In her own words, on why she started this race.



Watch the video here!

Our mission

We support local community members affected by breast cancer, with financial grants, care boxes, and practical comfort during treatment.



Pink Relief Grants

Direct financial help for the bills that don’t pause for treatment: rent, gas to chemo, groceries.



Pink Care Boxes

Care packages delivered straight to patients, gas cards, gift cards, comfort items. A small box that says someone’s thinking of you.



Port Access Shirts

Chemo port access shirts and recovery essentials, so getting dressed for treatment is one less hard thing.

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Her legacy, year over year

What began as one race has grown every single year, even through everything.

YEAR ONE, 2023

400+

PARTICIPANTS

$38,000+

RAISED

Brittany turned an idea into a real race.

YEAR TWO, 2024

400+

PARTICIPANTS

$52,000+

RAISED

Weeks before this race, Brittany was re-diagnosed. She had surgery and chemo about a week and a half before event day, and put on the race anyway.

YEAR THREE, 2025

800+

PARTICIPANTS

~$100,000

RAISED

The first race without her. Weeks after we lost Brittany, this community showed up bigger than ever, in her honor.

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Here’s how to help right now

Every option below funds a Pink Relief Grant for someone in Carteret County.

Sponsor

Rose $250, Fuchsia $500, Magenta $1,000. Pick a tier that fits your business.

letsmakepinkjustacolor@gmail.com

Register

Run, walk, or send your team. Oct 18

runsignup.com/Race/NC/MoreheadCity/LetsMakePinkJustaColor

Donate

Any amount goes straight to grants

runsignup.com/Race/Donate/NC/MoreheadCity/LetsMakePinkJustaColor

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BREAST CANCER AWARENESS

Breast Cancer and How to Avoid It

Mindy Merritt, MD

10/6/26

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Women in Business Conference, Crystal Coast

Overview

- Most common cancer in women worldwide (since 2020)
  - 2.3 million cases
  - Incidence has increased by more than 20% since 2008 & mortality increased by 14% (due to global disparities in care; high-income countries have seen decrease in mortality
- **Importance of Prevention**
- **Empowerment through Education**

Reproductive Shifts: Delays in childbearing, having fewer children, and shorter durations of breastfeeding all lead to higher lifetime exposure to estrogen, which feeds certain breast cancers.

Metabolic Changes: Global increases in obesity, physical inactivity, and alcohol consumption

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What is breast cancer?

- **What is Breast Cancer?:** Breast cancer develops when cells in the breast grow uncontrollably, often forming a tumor. It can occur in the ducts (ductal carcinoma) or in the lobules (lobular carcinoma).

- **Risk Factors:** While genetic factors like BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutations significantly contribute to breast cancer, lifestyle factors such as diet, physical activity, and alcohol use also play a crucial role.

- **Not All Risks Are Preventable:** While we cannot change our genetic makeup or age, we can control our environment and lifestyle, which can have a profound effect on reducing the risk of developing breast cancer.

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Hereditary Cancer

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEREDITARY CANCER

2 normal genes → 1 damaged gene
1 normal gene → 2 damaged genes → **Tumor develops**

In hereditary cancer, one damaged gene is inherited.

1 damaged gene
1 normal gene → 2 damaged genes → **Tumor develops**

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Key Risk Factors

- **Non-Modifiable Risk Factors:** These include age, family history of breast cancer, and inherited genetic mutations (e.g., BRCA1, BRCA2). A woman’s risk increases with age, particularly after 50.
    - Prior chest radiation
- **Modifiable Risk Factors:** These include lifestyle-related factors such as diet, alcohol consumption, smoking, physical inactivity, and hormone replacement therapy (HRT).
    - Alcohol 12% of breast cancers linked to alcohol intake (37,000+ cases per year)
    - obesity
- **Hormonal and Reproductive Factors** - due to prolonged exposure to estrogen
    - early menstruation
    - late menopause
    - never having children
    - delaying childbirth

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Lifestyle Changes to Lower Risk

- Exercise
- Healthy food choices
- Weight management
- Limiting alcohol
- Avoiding smoking can lower the risk

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Physical Activity and Breast Cancer Risk

- **Exercise Reduces Risk**
  - physically active have a 20-30% lower risk
- **How Does Exercise Help?:**
  - regulate hormone levels
  - reduce inflammation
  - improve immune function
  - maintain a healthy weight
- **Recommendations**
  - at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise (like brisk walking)
  - 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise per week.

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Schmid, D., & Leitzmann, M. F. (2014). Physical activity and breast cancer prevention. World Journal of Clinical Oncology, 5(3), 47–58.

Maintaining a Healthy Weight

- **Obesity and Risk**
  - especially after menopause, is a well-established risk factor for breast cancer
  - Fat tissue produces estrogen
- **How to Achieve Healthy Weight**
  - balanced diet
  - engaging in regular physical activity
- **Body Fat and Estrogen**
  - After menopause, fat tissue becomes the primary source of estrogen production, specifically abdominal fat

Renehan, A. G., et al. (2016). Obesity and risk of breast cancer. The Lancet Oncology, 17(8), 1061-1070.

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Diet & Nutrition

- Eat More Plant-Based Foods
- Limit Red Meat and Processed Foods
  - Deli-meat
  - Bacon, sausage
- Healthy Fats
  - Omega-3 fatty acids
  - Olive oil
  - Other plant-based fats (avocados)

Farvid, M. S., et al. (2018). Dietary fat intake and breast cancer risk: A review of epidemiologic studies. European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 72(9), 1183-1193.

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Alcohol Consumption & Breast Cancer Risk

- **Alcohol Increases Risk**
  - Each drink per day (whether wine, beer, or liquor) raises the risk by approximately 7-10%
  - **How?**
    - Alcohol can increase estrogen levels
- **Recommendation**
  - Goal of 3-4 per week or less
  - Not more than 1 at a time
  - For some women, the safest option is to avoid alcohol altogether.

Seitz, H. K., & Zucker, S. D. (2017). Alcohol and breast cancer risk: A review of the literature. Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, 41(6), 1272-1281.

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Smoking & Breast Cancer

- **Tobacco Use and Risk**
  - known carcinogen
  - smoking increases the risk of breast cancer, particularly in premenopausal women
  - Approximate 10% increased risk in estrogen positive tumors
- **How?**
  - causes mutations in the DNA, which may lead to cancer development
  - disrupts estrogen metabolism
- **Quitting Smoking**
  - Risk decreases after quitting smoking
  - benefits are immediate
    - improved immune function
    - hormone regulation

Yang, Y., et al. (2017). Smoking and breast cancer risk: A review of the literature. Cancer Causes & Control, 28(5), 493-500.
Kawai M, Malone KE, Tang MT, Li CI. Active smoking and the risk of estrogen receptor-positive and triple-negative breast cancer among women ages 20 to 44 years. Cancer. 2014 Apr 1;120(7):1026-34. doi: 10.1002/cncr.28402. Epub 2014 Feb 10.

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Hormone Contraception and Risk of Breast Cancer

- Relative risk of invasive among current users of any hormonal contraception was 1.20
- Relative risk increased with duration of use
  - Ranged from 1.09 for less than 1 year to 1.38 for 10+ years
- Risk was similar among formulations of combined oral contraceptives
- Progestin-only formulation results inconsistent
- Levonorgestrel-releasing IUD relative risk of 1.21 compared to never-users
  - Did not increase with duration of use

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Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

- **Increased Risk with Combined HRT:** 5+ years of use. **Why Does This Happen?:** Combined HRT (estrogen and progesterone) raises estrogen levels, which can promote the growth of estrogen-sensitive breast cancer cells.

- **Alternatives**

Regular exercise

Balanced food choices

Relaxation therapy

Yoga

Meditation

Spiritual guidance

Antidepressants

Venlafaxine 75mg daily: 61% reduction in menopausal symptoms vs. 20% for placebo. Effects lasted approximately 12 weeks.

Herbals

Studies are inconsistent: black cohosh, ginseng, vitamin E, evening primrose oil, isoflavones, phytoestrogens.

Non-hormonal options worth discussing with your provider.

Dr. Mindy Merritt, MD

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Million Women Study Collaborators. (2019). Breast cancer risk in relation to the age at menopause and use of hormone replacement therapy. Lancet, 383(9924), 2152-2160.

The Role of Breastfeeding

- **Breastfeeding Protects Against Breast Cancer**
  - extended period (6 months or longer) have a lower risk of breast cancer.
- **How?**
  - **Hormonal Mechanism**
  - reduces the number of menstrual
    - delays the return of ovulation

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The 4th Annual 5K & 1.5-Mile Fun Run/Walk

This is our biggest fundraiser of the year, and it directly funds Pink Relief Grants.

October 18, 2026

Sports Center, Morehead City

Choose your distance: run or walk the 5K, or take the 1.5-mile route. Open to every fitness level, every age.

A community that shows up

Survivors, families, local businesses, and first-time 5K walkers all on the same course. This is Carteret County at its best. It’s become the event people plan their October around.

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