

# Hey Girl!

Fall 2017  
Issue 1  
Hey Girl!  
is a quarterly  
publication of  
SISTA AH Talk  
Miami, FL

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Hey Girl!  
is published to keep  
you informed about  
our work and the  
experiences of breast  
cancer survivors in  
South Florida.

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September 2017

## Beginnings

Selina A. Smith, PhD, MDiv  
*SISTA AH Talk! Founder*

It was December 1994. I was a researcher at a major Cancer Center, and I was diagnosed with the very disease that I was studying. My study targeted African American breast cancer survivors (their mothers, sisters, and daughters). As the New Year arrived, I began treatment (bilateral mastectomy with reconstructive surgery).

By spring, I was enrolled in a clinical trial. By summer, I was recovering. Before the dark rings on my finger nails faded, before the sores in my mouth healed, before my energy returned, a nurse psychologist approached me with an idea: *the first breast cancer support group for women of color in South Florida*. I got started.

In October 1995, a few survivors— **Shirley Blades, Cathee Connor, and Mary Thompson**, along with their supporters, attended the first meeting of SISTA AH (Survivors Involving Supporters to Take Action to Advance Health) Talk!, Women of Color Breast Cancer Support Group. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Happy 22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary, SISTA AH Talk!

## Go Figure

Most folk don't care much for statistics. Reminds them a boring, daunting subject: math.

Understanding breast cancer figures like incidence (the number of cases diagnosed), mortality (the number of deaths), and recurrence (the number of cases returning after treatment), is important for survivors.

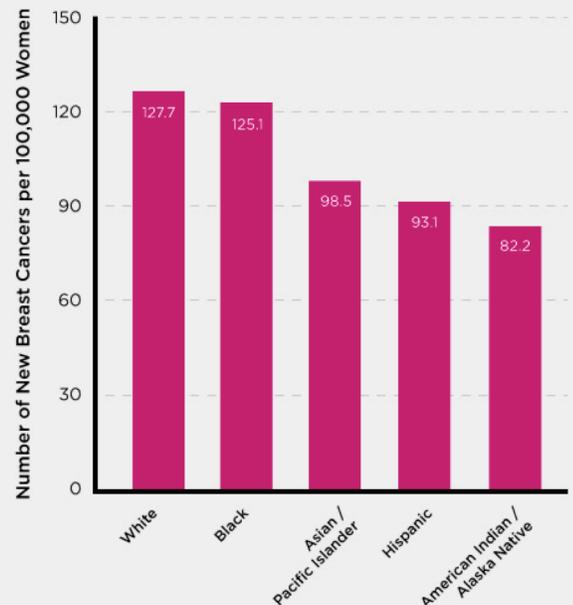
For women in the US, breast cancer is the most common cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death.

In 2017, it's estimated that among women in the US, there will be:

- 252,710 new cases of invasive breast cancer
- 40,610 breast cancer deaths

Incidence rates are lower and death rates are higher for black women as compared to whites. Black women are more often diagnosed with breast cancer at younger ages and with more aggressive and advanced tumors.

Breast Cancer Incidence in U.S. Women  
by Race and Ethnicity, 2010-2014



For more information, visit the SISTA AH Talk website Resource page: [www.sistaah-talk.net](http://www.sistaah-talk.net)



**SISTA AH Talk!**  
Women of Color Breast Cancer Support Group

*Give Thanks*

### Answering the Call

Mary S. Whitehead, MPH, CHES  
*SISTA AH Talk! Facilitator*

The year 1990 was an exciting time. With the advent of the New Year, I gave birth to twins. My pregnancy was a surprise, and although I elected not to know the sex of my babies, I secretly prayed for healthy baby boys.

### God answered my prayer.

Fast forward to 1991 and I was experiencing the joy of their first birthday party. One month later, in the shower, I discovered a lump in my left breast. I remember thinking, "What could it be?" After a trip to the doctor and a series of screenings, my perfect life was interrupted by the words, "You have breast cancer."

### Hold up God, this was not my prayer.

I asked God, "Please allow me to live to see my babies grow up. If you take me now, they will never know their mother. Please let me live and I promise to spend the rest on my life helping others." While going through chemotherapy, radiation, and multiple surgeries, God revealed to me His purpose for my life.

### God said that my body would be cancer-free, but my life would not be free from cancer.

Post-treatment and four years after my diagnosis, I accepted an invitation from Dr. Selina Smith to join a support group. When she left Miami to move to Atlanta, she asked me to serve as its facilitator. **SISTA AH Talk!** is a calling that God has placed on my life. I humbly accepted the call to unapologetically serve, with full confidence, in the perfect will of my Father in Heaven. For the same anointing that was upon Christ while He walked this earth, is now upon my life. Answering God's call has prepared me to serve breast cancer survivors and their supporters.

**Thank you God, for answering my prayers.**

### Give Back

During Thanksgiving 2015 and 2016, **SISTA AH Talk!** partnered with **G. Smith Senior Support Services, Udonis Haslen Foundation, and Broward County Professional Business Women** to engage the South Florida community. **Give Thanks** represents one of the many ways we collaborate with other non-profit organizations to support individuals diagnosed with cancer. Last year, we provided Thanksgiving baskets—filled with turkey, fresh vegetables, and other meal staples—to 50 cancer survivors, their children, and families. If you would like to help us give back, please visit our website ([www.sistaah-talk.net](http://www.sistaah-talk.net)) Click on the **PayPal Donate Now** button at the bottom of Home page.



### Pink is the New Black

Pink is the international color for breast cancer awareness. Wearing pink during **Breast Cancer Awareness Month** expresses support for women with breast cancer.

We are promoting PINK—hats, dresses, shoes, suits, ties, and purses—during the **Pink Hat Tea & Fashion Show**. Get in on the fun while showing your support for women living with breast cancer by wearing pink. Secret judges will rate you for *perfection in pink* and prizes will be awarded.



**Pink Hat Tea & Fashion Show**  
Doubletree Hotel by Hilton Grand Hotel  
1717 N. Bayshore Drive Miami, FL 33132  
Sunday, October 15, 2017  
2:00pm-4:00pm



**SISTA AH Talk!**  
Women of Color Breast Cancer Support Group

### Pink Passion

Meet Karen Henderson of **To Be One Events** featuring the **Karris Kloset Showcase**. She will serve as Fashion Show Director for the **Pink Hat Tea & Fashion Show**. A team of models—breast cancer survivors—will be featured in the show.



### Diva in Pink

Syndy Colebrook is no stranger to **SISTA AH Talk!** She sang during our Thanksgiving celebration, 'Give Thanks,' in 2015 and 2016.



Syndy is an entertainer and radio personality. Her show is **On Air with Syndy Colebrook on TNT Gospel Radio** (online on Shoutcast). She will entertain us during the **Pink Hat Tea & Fashion Show**.

## The VOICE Study

With funding from the **National Institute of Minority Health & Health Disparities**, we surveyed 240 South Florida African American breast cancer survivors to learn about their lifestyle needs and experiences.

The outcome of the VOICE study was a partnership with survivors to develop three (3) lifestyle interventions:

1. Mobile Cancer Prevention App (mCPA)
2. Community Approach to Cooking Healthy (CoACH)
3. Physical Activity Intervention Developed (PAID) to Prevent Breast Cancer

To learn more about SISTA AH Talk research results, visit the Publications Page on our website: [www.sistaahtalk.net](http://www.sistaahtalk.net)

# Our Search



## mCPA

Through funding from the **Medical College of Georgia Foundation**, we initiated development of a smart phone app to promote cancer prevention.

SISTA AH Talk! Coaches, led by Mary Whitehead (nutrition) and Cathee Connor (physical activity), taped cooking demonstrations and exercise sessions.

Our photographer and videographer, Deloris Johnson, captured us having tons of fun as we shared our successes and challenges with healthy eating and physical activity. These 8 mini videos will be featured on the SISTA AH Talk! app.

To watch our YouTube videos, go to our website: [www.sistaahtalk.net](http://www.sistaahtalk.net)

Last year, we conducted focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews to learn first-hand what survivors wanted in their lifestyle programs. Here is what SISTA AH Talk! told us (and how we responded):

- Survivors should facilitate the intervention (we trained Coaches to lead the way).
- Use KISS—the *keep it simple, sweetheart* principal—nothing too complicated (we worked with survivors to develop session content).
- Make the sessions “show me” (hands-on) not “tell me” (lectures) (we listened).

## CoACH

If it takes a *village* to raise a child, then it takes a *community* to change the eating habits of a survivor. To make changes in her diet, an **individual**, must *want* to change. To change how she eats, she will also need support from someone close to her, a personal **relationship** (like a relative, co-worker, classmate, or church member). She needs **community** help (like a support group) to overcome barriers to change. And, she needs **societal** buy-in—from her church, neighborhood association, or civic organization—to make changes to her eating habits last. We are using a **socio-ecological framework** (individual, relationship, community, societal) in the CoACH intervention.

Visit the About Us page on our website to meet SISTA AH Talk! Coaches  
[www.sistaahtalk.net](http://www.sistaahtalk.net)



## PAID

We used the socio-ecological framework to develop a multi-component, facilitated 24-week intervention focused on reducing barriers to exercise that promote benefits (‘pay off’) of meeting physical activity guidelines.

PAID includes:

- Educational sessions
- Support group discussions
- Structured, moderately intensive physical activity
  - Walking
  - Strength training
  - Yoga (with Pilates)

Societal Community Relationship Individual



# WHAT'S UP?

There is plenty going on this October...  
get out and visit these events

## Chit Chat

Join SISTA AH Talk! for the launch of a new program based on our tradition of talking face-to-face with health care providers. **Ask the Experts** is an opportunity to learn about the latest in health care. Come and join the conversation with family doctor and holistic practitioner **Glenda Hutson, MD.** Learn about complementary therapies, nutrition, and much more. The event will be held Saturday, October 14, 2017, 3:00pm-5:00pm at the Arcola Lakes Library, 8240 NW 7<sup>th</sup> in Miami. The event is free and open to the public, but space is limited. *Light refreshments will be served.* For reservations, email us at [sistaah-talk95@gmail.com](mailto:sistaah-talk95@gmail.com) or text Mary @ (305) 333-3495.



## Power Source

SISTA AHs have been communicating in Circles—in African, Haiti, Cuba, the Caribbean, and the Americas—for ages. The Circle is a place to bear witness, share wisdom, give/receive support, and find strength. To celebrate survivorship, **SISTA AH Circle** will gather:

Friday, October 13, 2017  
3:00-5:00pm  
Arcola Lakes Library  
8240 NW 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Miami, FL 33150

*Light refreshments will be served*



Contact Mary @ (305) 333-3495



## Healing Waters

In the Christian tradition, water has spiritual meanings. It is a place of healing, renewal, and life. For many women, faith is essential to the cancer journey.

Join SISTA AH Talk! for:  
**Devotion on the Beach**  
Saturday, October 14, 2017  
Fort Lauderdale Beach, FL

Go to the Events Page on our website to learn more:  
[www.sistaah-talk.net](http://www.sistaah-talk.net)

## Show Support

Women love to dress up. Men do, too. Put on your Sunday best, bring a friend, and open your purse or wallet to support our annual fundraising event, the **Pink Hat Tea & Fashion Show.** Your participation will help fund SISTA AH Talk! Programs, like **Lil' SISTA AH Talk**, an effort to help high school age girls and college age women understand breast-healthy behaviors; and **Let's Get Physical** or **MyPlate Palooza**, focused on lifestyle and cancer prevention. *Can't attend?* Consider donating \$75 so that a breast cancer survivor who cannot afford a ticket can attend.



For more information, visit our website: [www.sistaah-talk.net](http://www.sistaah-talk.net)  
To RSVP, contact: Mary S. Whitehead, MPH, CHES (305) 333-3495 by 10/12/2017  
Table discounts and sponsorship opportunities available