STEP BY STEP

By Earlene Gleisner, RN, for Avenues to Wellness

“Villains and Heroines, Perils and Schemes” was the topic of Dr. Kimberly Faucher’s free talk sponsored by Avenues to Wellness (ATW) at the Senior Center on Tuesday, January 6th. Using photos of celebrities who have died from cancer, she reminded the audience that each of us is a celebrity in our own lives. We have an impact on others; our family, friends and community. Prevention and early detection can help reduce the negative aspect cancer can cause.

As a gynecologist and obstetrician, Dr. Faucher’s focus is on woman’s health, but her presentation gave an overview of common factors which can increase a woman and a man’s risk of cancer: smoking, sun overexposure, second hand smoke exposure, obesity, and lack of exercise. These behaviors can be changed with determination and support.

Your willingness to go through screening procedures can be valuable when a cancerous polyp or cyst is found early. These screens include mammograms for woman, breast exams for both men and women (men can get breast cancer too, although at a lower incidence rate), Pap exams and tests for woman, colonoscopies for both as well as full body skin exams.

You can also be aware of your body. If you have a skin mole or lesion growing and changing, a change in bowel or bladder habits, a swollen area in an unusual part of your body, please bring this to the attention of your doctor. You are your best defense against cancer.

To assist you in any changes you may want to make, ATW has started the first of a series of workshops titled “Healthier Living” based on a very successful model developed by Stanford University. It’s a proven “winner” for supporting people who are dealing with chronic disease or their family members, or for individuals wanting to increase their skills or motivation to live a healthier life. The “Healthier Living” series meets weekly for 6 weeks and is FREE to the public. Preregistration is required.

Take the ATW monthly Challenge: One action to help you prevent mindless eating or smoking is to delay your urge or craving for a food or cigarette for five minutes. Set a timer and go do something else. You can also drink a glass of water or do a deep breathing exercise, take a walk or wash the dishes. Chances are you will forget your craving. When the next one comes up, repeat the delaying tactic. Repetition of this exercise can interrupt your “inattention” and set you on a path to “mindfulness” as well as decrease binge-eating and smoking.

ATW was created especially for Inland Mendocino County by the Frank R. Howard Foundation. Visit [www.avenuestowellness.org](http://www.avenuestowellness.org) or email [atwforhealth@gmail.com](mailto:atwforhealth@gmail.com) for more information.

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