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July 2021 Ray of Hope: News from VCU Massey Cancer Center

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To: advos@vcu.edu

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Give now to support cancer research >

A large graphic with a yellow background and a white sunburst pattern. The words "RAY OF HOPE" are written in a large, white, serif font across the center of the sunburst.

RAY OF HOPE

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July 2021

Director's Update

Dear *|GREETING|*,

The summer months are about spending time with family, being outdoors and staying active, and taking stock of the blessings in our lives — all good things. With the heat of the summer, though, come added threats from the sun. July is UV Safety Awareness Month and is a great time to talk about prevention. Staying hydrated and using sunscreen is critical, as is eating well and keeping up to date on health screenings, including for cancer.

These steps are important for every one of us — men and women, kids and adults, those with fair and moderate complexions and people of color — to prevent, diagnose and treat cancer. I spoke about the importance of these preventive measures on **NBC12** recently and as part of a panel discussion at **ESSENCE Festival 2021**. Prevention is everything. And we all — and that means you and me — must do our part. That is the only way we will see a future without cancer.

Best,

Robert A. Winn, M.D.

Director and Lipman Chair in Oncology, VCU Massey Cancer Center

Senior Associate Dean for Cancer Innovation, VCU School of Medicine

Be Innovative

Check out our latest research news



Research shows geographic HPV vaccination disparities

Although Virginia is one of the few states to mandate HPV vaccination for girls for school entry, the overall rate of coverage in the state remains low compared to the national average. A new study led by Massey researchers shows significantly lower coverage in predominantly rural localities and overall large geographic disparities.

Read more



Massey researcher gets \$1.3 million grant to identify environmental cancer risks

Massey researcher David Wheeler, Ph.D., has received more than \$1.3 million in total funding through a U01 grant from the National Cancer Institute to better understand environmental, geographic and socioeconomic risk factors that lead to bladder cancer and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

[Read more](#)

Be Involved

Support advances in cancer research



Swim Across America returns Aug. 21

*“A river cuts through rock not because of its power but because of its persistence.”
— Jim Watkins*

Fighting cancer takes persistence, creativity and passionate supporters. On Saturday, Aug. 21, Swim Across America invites participants in the Richmond area to swim (or float) to raise money for cancer research. Richmond’s third annual Open Water Swim event aims to raise \$50,000, with a \$200 minimum fundraising; opportunities to participate remotely or virtually are available. The event is open to all ages and abilities and includes post-event festivities at a private home on the river. It’s time to suit up, Massey Nation, and use our power and persistence to move us closer to a future without cancer. *Massey will monitor and follow recommendations from the Virginia Department of Health to ensure water quality and the safety of SAA participants.*

Learn more and register



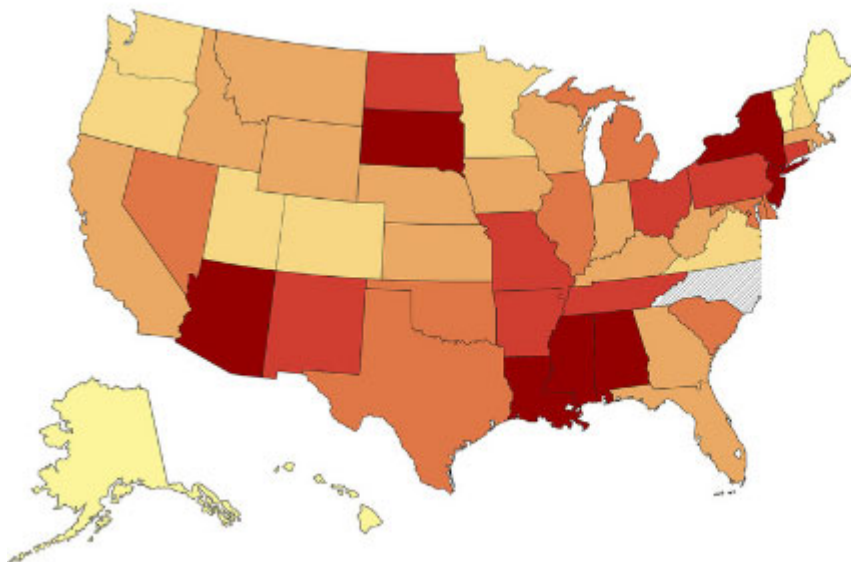
Massey on the River Fund-a-Cure to honor Massey Alliance member

This year's Massey on the River is back! The Sept. 10 event, at a new location (Historic Tredegar), will be a spectacular party hosted by the Massey Alliance, a group of young professionals who raise funds for cancer research. This summer, Massey Alliance lost a board member and friend, Clint Nichols, at the age of 38. As event chair in 2017, Nichols introduced Fund-a-Cure to the event, inviting guests to donate directly to cancer research and helping raise \$90,000 for Massey. Proceeds from this year's Fund-a-Cure will be donated in memory of Nichols. Tickets are on sale now, starting at \$75 (\$110 VIP); if you can't attend, you can make a Fund-a-Cure donation to honor Nichols.

Buy tickets, donate and learn more

Be Informed

Learn how we are improving health



VCU study on life expectancy for Black and Latino populations receives international attention

VCU Massey Cancer Center researcher **Steven Woolf, M.D.** (H.S.'93/M), director of the VCU Center on Society and Health, is leading a study showing a “jolting” drop in life expectancy among Black and Latino populations since the pandemic began, the largest single-year drop since World War II. The study, which looks at neighborhoods in Richmond, Virginia, at the highest risk for cancer, is tied to other longstanding health inequities. The study was featured on the front page of the Richmond Times-Dispatch and picked up by U.S. and international news outlets, including “PBS NewsHour,” NPR’s “Morning Edition,” USA Today and Forbes.

Read more



Sheppard receives professional achievement award

Vanessa B. Sheppard, Ph.D., associate director for community outreach, engagement and health disparities at Massey, recently received the 2021 Women in Science, Dentistry and Medicine Professional Achievement Award from the VCU School of Medicine. She was recognized as a role model and mentor and for promoting the professional development of other women faculty members through professional excellence, leadership, scholarship and teaching expertise.

[Read more](#)

Be Inspired

Meet the people who inspire us



Massey patient Michelle Nix navigates cervical cancer during a pandemic

Virginia resident Michelle Nix was diagnosed with stage 3 cervical cancer in 2020. She began a six-week regimen of chemotherapy and radiation treatments at Massey and participated in a phase 1 clinical trial, receiving infusions of an immunotherapeutic drug called pembrolizumab. At her most recent scan, Nix showed no evidence of disease; she credits the providers at Massey for helping her through this challenging time.

[Read more](#)

Cancer doesn't stop for a pandemic, and neither do we.

Make a gift in tribute or honor of a loved one facing cancer and support lifesaving cancer research at VCU Massey Cancer Center.

At Massey, a future without cancer is how we will measure our success.



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