Meeting Notes – Oct. 31, 2023

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, October 31, 2023. Rotarian Dr. Butch Busby provided the club with an update on Operation Wipeout Cervical Cancer. Not quite two-and-a-half years ago, Dr. Heather White, Executive Director of TogetHER for Health reached out to Dr. Isabel Scarinci of UAB and the two formulated a bold plan to wipe out cervical cancer. Alabama has among the highest rates of cervical cancer in the US and Chambers County has the highest rate of cervical cancer within the state. Neither Dr. White nor Dr. Scarinci had any contacts in Chambers County, so Dr. Scarinci reached out to her Rotary Club in Birmingham, which in turn reached out to the Rotary Club in LaFayette. Not quite two-and-a-half years ago, the Birmingham club, including Dr. Scarinci, came to LaFayette and presented a program to our LaFayette club. By November 2021, Operation Wipe Out was launched in Alabama, taking action to improve cervical cancer screening, education, and HPV vaccination. On May 8, 2023, a statewide plan to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem was launched by the Alabama Department of Public Health. Dr. Busby shared with us a video documentary that has been produced by a group from Australia but has not been publicly release yet.

The documentary traces this initiative from its inception to the present. Cervical cancer survivors are featured, as are other partners in the campaign, such as the University of Alabama (UAB) Medicine Obstetrics and Gynecology, UAB Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center, TogetHER for Health, the Alabama Department of Public Health, Chambers County Health Department, Auburn University School of Nursing, the Chambers County School System, the Birmingham Rotary Club and the LaFayette Rotary Club, among others. Our own Dr. Butch Busby is featured in the documentary and has been a key liaison between UAB, its other partners and Chambers County. Dr. Scarinci refers to him as their "champion". The initiative focuses on education, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of the disease. The goal is to ELIMINATE, not just reduce, cervical cancer.

Diane Sherriff