

A patient poses in front of the mobile care clinic after taking her screening



▶▶ New York Causes on Wheels / 2. The AICF Mobile Care Clinic

A Mobile Care Clinic to Fight Breast Cancer

The American-Italian Cancer Foundation does a remarkable job in helping New York City women learn about breast cancer. A mobile care clinic that travels throughout the city is one recent example.

by T. C.

▶▶ The American-Italian Cancer Foundation is about improving research, but it also cares about the community and being part of it. Its mobile care clinic aims to shorten the distance between patients and quality medical care, which is often complicated by bureaucracy.

We had the chance to witness the community work done by the “Mobile, No-Cost Breast Cancer Screening” program when their bus stopped in front of The Ryan Center to offer special screenings to the public. Ruth L. Vega, Director of Cancer Screening, Outreach, and Education for AICF, explained the importance of cancer awareness and the significant support that each year an Italian sponsor provides for the Foundation (this time the sponsor was Colavita USA).

“We operate this mobile care clinic. We do mammograms, clinical breast exams, and offer education on self-breast awareness,” said Vega. “Our focus is really on making breast cancer [screening] available to medically underserved women, women with no insurance, who have low income, women of color. We provide the women with this service at no cost. If they don’t have insurance, they don’t have to pay anything. If they do have insurance, we take their information, but they don’t have to pay either. We also do it in conjunction with a community based organization that knows the women of this community and can help us to let them know that this service is available to them.”

Every day, Wednesday through Sunday, the mobile clinic goes to a different location. Including weekends is of importance, for in this way they can also see women who have a job, or kids to attend to during the week. “We cover all of New



▶▶ Sponsored by Colavita USA

The Mediterranean diet may help cancer prevention

Every year the mobile clinic and its screening program is supported by generous sponsors. This year it is Colavita USA—the Italian food company that produces and imports authentic Italian products like extra virgin olive oil, vinegar, pasta, and sauces. Colavita USA embraced the cause wholeheartedly and, besides covering all the daily expenses, they gave out gifts to the patients. “They offered oil and vinegar and pasta. The women loved it! It’s wonderful to have them as our partners” says Ruth Vega. Thanks to Colavita USA, 37 women received no-cost mammograms and clinical breast exams on the day of our visit. On the subject of food, we asked Vega about the relation between nutrition and cancer prevention. “A good healthy diet, low in cholesterol with lots of vegetables, is always the best diet for your health in general,” she pointed out. “But specific to cancers, it has been found that women who have much leaner diets actually do better. Asian women, who have lots of fish in their diet, or those following the Mediterranean diet. These are the kinds of diets that may reduce the rates of cancer.”

community. With our white walls, hardwood floors, and gas in our tank, our bus is a fully equipped alternative art space that crosses all barriers. The bright blue color of the bus’s exterior cultivates curiosity, creativity, and joy and serves as a bridge to connect people with their community. All the antiwar, civil rights, and feminist movements of the past, have showed us that together we have strong power and together we can do a lot. And we need to get to the streets, that’s a real powerful place: the streets!” ▶▶