



Photo Credit: Shawna Farley - MCDP Media & Public Relations Chair

America has No King by Shawna Farley

Members of Monroe County Democratic Party participated in the “No Kings” protest on Flag Day, June 14, 2025. From St. Mary's Park, and across the MLK Jr. bridge to the Post Office, people kept appearing. The rally was notably peaceful while counter protesters attempted to bait, instigate, and agitate unsuccessfully. The honking, and cheering in support of democracy was electrifying! This rally had over 200 people in attendance, with over 5 million attending 2100 rallies nationwide.

We are not alone in recognizing what stomping on the constitution by this administration is costing America. Each rally participant came for their own reasons, yet we stood together as one. We must safeguard everything our flag represents: our Constitution, human rights, families, neighbors, and friends. Above all, we must protect what so many sacrificed their lives for... Freedom, the American dream, and the ‘United’ States of America. The downtown Monroe “No Kings” protest was organized by **Good Trouble Monroe**.

Our true allegiance is to the Constitution not to any single president. Brave soldiers died so we could live in freedom and democracy. We owe them more than words.

We will not let their sacrifice be in vain. We will not bow to an authoritarian regime. Now is the time to rise, to speak out, and to act. Use your voice. Peaceful protest showed our power, and that power moves to the ballot box.

Keep the fire in your heart. Vote for leaders who defend our rights, protect our Constitution, and serve all of us. Every vote is a shield against tyranny. Every vote honor those who gave everything for our country.

Stand up! Speak out! Vote with purpose! Together, we reclaim our American promise and build a future worthy of their sacrifice. Let’s take this forward to the polls!



Coming right up...

- Jun 19 - Juneteenth Family Reunion Celebration
Montague Park - 2-9pm
- Jun 23 - MCDP Golf Fundraiser - 7am
Green Meadows Golf Course
- Jun 28 - Monroe Pride - 1-7pm
111 W Elm Ave, Monroe, MI
- Jun 28 - Milan Pride - 12-3pm
Milan Center for Innovative Studies
156 Big Red Dr, Milan, MI 48160
- Every Tues - Food Pantry UMC - 10-11am
8165 Douglas Rd. Lambertville
- July 03 - MCDP Membership Meeting





BREAKING THE CHAINS

Emancipatory *Juneteenth* and the *Statue of Liberty*

by Shawna Farley



Juneteenth and the Statue of Liberty both stand as powerful symbols in modern social justice movements, particularly in the fight for racial equality and civil rights. Freedom is not just a historical milestone; it is an ongoing pursuit and is defended by every generation.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, legally ending slavery in Confederate states. However, Texas slaveholders deliberately withheld this news for two and a half years, keeping thousands in bondage. It wasn't until June 19, 1865, when Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, that freedom was enforced. This day, now known as Juneteenth, became a rallying point for discussions on systemic racism, reparations, and Black liberation.

Lady Liberty was envisioned as a celebration of freedom overcoming oppression, reflecting the ideals of justice as envisioned by French abolitionist Édouard de Laboulaye, a tribute to the shared democratic values between France and the United States. Originally designed with broken chains in her hands, the definitive version placed the chains at her feet, yet often overlooked, a symbol of emancipation and justice, a powerful reminder of slavery's abolition.

The fight for civil rights did not end with Juneteenth or with Lady Liberty's arrival. Today, discrimination still exists as seen in inequities in every community, from unrealistic voting requirements to economic disparities. Racial disparities and injustices persist, proving that the work of breaking chains is never complete. The Statue of Liberty, meant to celebrate freedom, reminds us that liberty must always be protected. Through centuries of adversity, Black Americans have shown strength, resilience, and determination, transforming struggle into progress, justice, and hope for future generations.

How will we carry this legacy forward? Education, activism, and advocacy are just a few ways to ensure that the promise of freedom stays alive and strong.



Red: Blood shared and shed for liberation
Black: The people of African descent
Green: The natural wealth and promise of Africa

The Juneteenth flag is rooted in the U.S. Emancipation of June 19, 1865; the Pan-African flag unifies Black people globally
 Palette: Juneteenth's red-white-blue highlights American citizenship and hope; Pan-African red-black-green emphasizes shared heritage and resilience.



Star: Texas (the Lone Star State) and freedom for Black Americans in all 50 states.



Burst (Nova): A "new star" representing a fresh beginning.



Arc: A new horizon of opportunity.

Colors: Red, white, and blue echo the U.S. flag to affirm that the descendants of enslaved people are American

Will You be Going Up or Down? by Shawna Farley

In Michigan's legislative arena, the contrast between State Representative Reggie Miller's "Yes" votes and Senator Joe Bellino's "No" votes are like choosing between a smooth elevator ride to success and a broken lift that forces you to an endless stairway. For marginalized communities, especially Black residents, LGBTQ+ individuals, women, and transgender people, this choice has real, life-changing consequences. As we celebrate Pride and Juneteenth, it's crucial to understand how your vote can unlock access or leave obstacles standing in your way.

Access Through Data and Healthcare

SB 29 Healthcare Disparities:

Miller's Yes: The bill mandates that the Department of Health and Human Services collect annual data on racial and ethnic disparities, allowing policymakers to spot gaps in care and drive targeted reforms.

Bellino's No: Keeping the elevator out of order means these disparities stay hidden, and communities remain underserved.

SB 30 Perinatal Protection:

Miller's Yes: This measure sets up reporting procedures for mistreatment during the perinatal period, protecting pregnant women, especially women of color, by ensuring prompt intervention and better healthcare outcomes.

Bellino's No: Without these safeguards, vulnerable mothers might face ongoing neglect and abuse.

Elevating Civil and Identity Rights

SB 33 Pregnancy Status Protection:

Miller's Yes: Expands the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to include pregnancy status, extending essential legal protections in employment, housing, and public services.

Bellino's No: Leaves pregnant individuals exposed to discrimination, forcing them to take the stairs of struggle.

HB 4485 Justice for Survivors:

Miller's Yes: Extends the statute of limitations for sexual assault cases, granting survivors, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, a fairer chance at justice.

Bellino's No: Creates hurdles, leaving survivors stuck with limited options.

Empowering Identity and Community Safety

HB 5300 & HB 5303 Name and Gender Designation:

Miller's Yes: Simplifies the legal process for updating identity records, empowering transgender and nonconforming individuals to live authentically and safely.

Bellino's No: Maintains outdated, obstructive procedures, keeping the elevator broken.

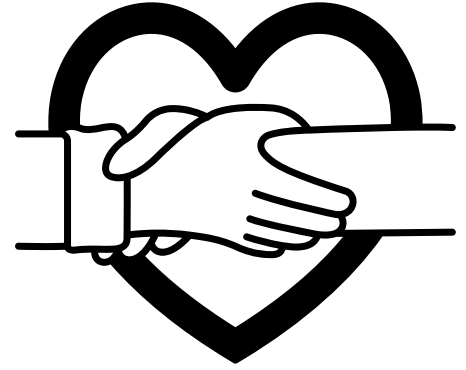
Miller's affirmative votes tear down systemic barriers and provide the elevator that accelerates access, protection, and equality. In contrast, **Bellino's "No" votes** force vulnerable communities to take the stairs, one arduous step at a time.

This Pride and Juneteenth, commit to future voting in everyone's best interest; Choose progress. Choose access. Choose a future where every Michigander can rise without obstruction.

Greta Thunberg on Making a Difference

by Christina Cusumano

Greta Thunberg, a well-known Swedish climate activist and Time Magazine's youngest "Person of the Year" (2019), has dedicated herself to another humanitarian crisis. During the first week of June 2025, Thunberg and twelve other activists boarded the Madleen vessel off the coast of Sicily to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza.



The Madleen mission was organized by the Freedom Flotilla's Coalition (FFC), a global non-profit that's fought to end the blockade of the Gaza strip since 2010. (<https://freedomflotilla.org/>). One month prior to Madleen's departure, another FFC vessel, Conscience, was attacked by two drones outside Malta. The destruction that occurred halted their mission to deliver aid as the vessel could not sail; Thunberg had anticipated boarding Conscience before the strikes. These events were documented by Thunberg via Instagram (@gretathunberg), where posts are sent to 15 million followers. Her platform expands support and awareness on many of the most crucial issues of our time.

"[Our] mission is about supporting Palestinian resistance and challenging the Israeli blockade and genocide when our complicit governments fail to step up," Thunberg wrote in early June. "It is only part of global movement for social and climate justice, liberation, and decolonization."

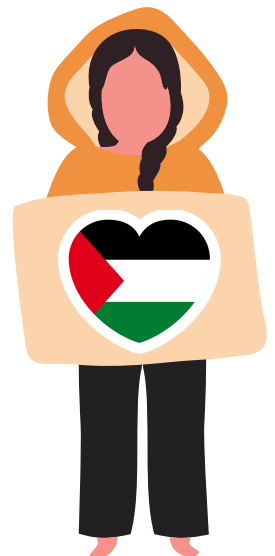
Beginning on June 3rd, Madleen reported her first drone sightings, confirmed to be a surveillance drone operated by the Hellenic Coast Guard (TRT Global). On June 9th, TRT Global reported that two Israeli drones directly interfered with the vessel, dropping a foam-y substance that cut off visibility and acted as a way of intimidating crew members. Madleen's communication was then jammed, severing all radio communications and disabling their tracking devices. Israel soldiers soon sieged the vessel, holding the activists to either be detained or deported. Madleen was about 100 nautical miles from Gaza when it was stopped, and was taken promptly to Israel's Port of Ashdod.

In a response to President Trump dismissing her efforts and suggesting she "seek anger management", Thunberg made the following statement upon arrival to Paris: "I think the world needs a lot more young angry women to be honest. That's the thing we need most now." (kaledioscopenews)



@gretathunberg

"If you're not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed and loving the people who are doing the oppressing." – Malcolm X



On June 13, House Republicans unveiled a second School Aid budget that cuts free breakfast and lunch, special education, mental-health services, school safety, and rural transportation. In contrast, House Democrats offered a plan to fully fund all those programs.

State Rep. Reggie Miller (D-Van Buren Twp.) went further: She introduced an amendment to guarantee universal free breakfast and lunch in Michigan schools. Republicans refused to consider it.

After voting against the GOP budgets, Miller said:

“I will not support a budget that sends kids to class hungry or leaves rural students without help. Our schools need strong investments in meals, safety, and learning supports. I urge my colleagues to join us at the negotiating table for a better plan for our children and communities.”



Michigan Democrats Introduce “Polluter Pay” Package to Hold Polluters Accountable

On June 6, 2025, a bipartisan group of Michigan legislators led by Sen. Jeff Irwin (D-Ann Arbor) and Rep. Jason Morgan (D-Ann Arbor) rolled out six bills to require tougher cleanups, boost site transparency, update safety standards, and make polluters pay medical-monitoring costs and legal damages.



They include:

Sen. Irwin/**HB 4640** Rep. Koleszar.

Moss (SB –)/Morgan (HB 4636) Lets EGLE update cleanup rules as science evolves. Prioritizes actual removal of hazards over fencing or restrictions.

Chang (SB –)/Arbit (**HB 4638**) Streamlines rulemaking so experts can tighten detection limits and criteria.

Shink (SB –)/McKinney (**HB 4637**) Holds polluters responsible for medical monitoring costs before illnesses appear.

McMorrow (SB –)/Skaggs (**HB 4639**) • Extends the time to sue for damage from “forever chemicals” and other emerging contaminants.

McCann (SB –)/Neeley (HB) Adopts a “discovery rule” so the clock on lawsuits starts when people learn they’ve been harmed, not when the spill occurred.

"Send them down to my shop"

"We'll have 4 different Militias there, we'll have a freakin' party"

At the June 3, 2025 Bedford Board meeting, Todd C. Bruning invited protest groups back to his shop; a move widely seen as a veiled threat given his history. In June 2020, Bruning threatened demonstrators from his rooftop with sniper rifles and shared racist, sexist, and homophobic slurs. This is a pattern that reflects his continued targeting of marginalized communities that are exercising their right to free speech and peaceful protest. [Video Source 1:07:30](#)

Window Warriors, Table Tacticians: Bonnie & Terri Shine On

"You're never fully dressed without a smile," and with every month's window display, Bonnie Boggs and Terri Langton prove it. In June, they outdid themselves. Terri's passion for American history filled our storefront with the Stars & Stripes, all military branches, and heartfelt Memorial Day and Flag Day tributes, and canvass outside in the office walkway.

They didn't stop there; for Pride, they built a grand welcome table that is also draped in Juneteenth flags and stocked with giveaway goodies. Stop by to thank them at Pride, Juneteenth, and beyond booths. As Terri works her magic at next month's Monroe County Fair booth, visit her and give feedback. Thank you, Bonnie and Terri, for making this party shine like the Chrysler Building!



Brewer Calls on Democrats to Turn Frustration into 2026 Success

At Monday's Monroe County Democratic Party meeting, former state party chair Mark Brewer delivered a frank assessment of Michigan's political landscape and clear guidance for his party's path forward. After thanking local activists for their tireless work in a challenging county, Brewer dissected the State House GOP's record under Speaker Matt Hall weekly grandstanding, near-zero legislative output, delayed budgets, threats to impeach Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and stone walling bills sent to the governor's desk. Brewer also warned that President Trump's ongoing assaults on America's democratic institutions, from undermining the courts and Congress to attacking the free press, higher education and individual rights must not go unchecked.

Turning to strategy, he urged Democrats to channel anger into constructive action ahead of the 2026 elections. Key steps include:

- Recruiting and training a diverse slate of candidates at every level;
- Crafting a positive, heart-and-mind economic message that resonates beyond the base;
- Deploying that message through digital, earned and grassroots channels;
- Mobilizing non-voters who sat out 2024 and engaging Republican leaning independents without condescension.

"Success won't happen by itself," Brewer reminded his audience. "Every Democrat must commit daily to candidate recruitment, voter outreach and message discipline. We can win in 2026, but only if each of us does our part now." Brewer closed by praising the energy of Michigan's grassroots, pledging to visit more county parties this year and reinforcing the belief that a united, initiative-taking Democratic Party can reclaim legislative and executive power across the state.



Embrace: Building Belonging & Opportunity

When you meet John Salow at one of Embrace's events, you're struck by two things: his easy smile and the genuine warmth he radiates toward everyone he greets. From the moment he came out in 1989, uncertain, but exhilarated by a newfound sense of freedom, John has been driven by compassion, proactivity, and the belief that everyone deserves a place to call home. We sat down with him to trace Embrace's journey and share in the future a thrilling next chapter: a community center that will serve all of Monroe.

The Birth of Embrace

Q: How did Embrace evolve from that spark? "Jason, Nadine, Brian and me. Four friends started meeting every week. We'd say, 'There's nothing here for us. No sense of family.' So, we created it. 'We belong. Come join us.' We hosted potlucks, art days, planned, the first pride in Munson Park, we've been here a long time but, We weren't a 501(c)(3) until this year.

Compassion in Action

John pauses, reflecting on the early days. "We weren't donors or politicians; we were neighbors. If someone needed a ride, we gave it. If someone needed a listening ear, we stayed up late talking. Seeing a need and acting on it before being asked."

The Visionary Partnership

Behind Embrace's vibrant flyers, art pieces, and socializing with coffee, stands Jason, John's dynamic partner in every venture. "Jason's an artist and visionary," John beams. "He sees blank walls as canvases. Together, he imagines what could be; I figure out how to make it happen."

The Next Frontier: A Community Center

Q: What's Embrace's next big goal? "A dedicated space in downtown Monroe," John says, smiling, "A place with a food pantry open to anyone in need. A true community hub where every neighbor feels welcome."

"There are great programs in Monroe, and we utilize one another. Collaborating with prism, and fellow nonprofits. "We've laid the groundwork," John explains, "but we need Monroe to finish this vision with us."

Get Involved and Be Part of Something Bigger

John, talking to the group that came for the coffee socializing "We're hosting a Halloween Bash on October 25 and our Friendsgiving celebration in November. We'll also have a ticket booth at Pride this summer. We are raising money to go toward that community center."

"When you help Embrace, you help all of us."

Embrace isn't just another nonprofit. it's a promise that Monroe can be kinder, stronger, and more inclusive. If you believe in compassion in action, in giving people a place to be, call their own, we invite you to:

- Join upcoming events: Halloween Bash, October 25 Friendsgiving, date TBA
- Volunteer or Donate online at www.EmbraceMonroe.org

John's optimism and Jason's boundless creativity, alongside Nadine, Brian, and every Embrace volunteer, chosen family member, and a community that includes all those in need, the future of Monroe has never looked brighter.

Q: John, how was the sense of community when you were young? "My dad was always supportive but, back in '89, I felt totally isolated. I thought, 'I'll never be with any one girl or guy and I'll always be 'on the outside.' We had gay bars, drove to big cities..."

In Monroe MI there's a place you don't have to drive far. When you walk in there's a sense of feeling seen. A sense of belonging. A place to be heard.



Check out EMBRACE's Website & Facebook

HAPPY PRIDE MONTH! **JUNE 2025**



EMBRACE
The LGBTQ+ Community of Monroe County

Yoga Meetup

FREE!
10 spaces per meetup

Mats & Props Provided!

Yoga Instructor • Jennie Small
@ Delirium Moon
34 S. Monroe St., Monroe, MI

The First Monday Of Every Month Starting in MARCH!
6p.m. - 7p.m.

MAR 3, APR 7, MAY 5, JUN 2, JUL 7, AUG 4, SEP 1, OCT 6, NOV 3, DEC 1



Photo Credit: Franklin Brooks

Monroe Police acting as a neutral peacekeeper by enforcing laws equally and protecting everyone's right to protest. Set up "dialogue zones" where opposing groups can safely meet for structured conversations.



EMBRACE
The LGBTQ+ Community of Monroe County

LGBTQIA+ ART CLUB

Art as Therapy or just to Create.

The 3rd Wednesday of every month from 6pm - 9pm

@ Green Witch Gardens
8930 S Custer Rd, Monroe, MI

Jan 15, Feb 19, Mar 19, Apr 16, May 21, Jun 18, Jul 16, Aug 20, Sep 17, Oct 15, Nov 19, Dec 17

Allies Welcome! Come create with us.

Some sketching supplies available to borrow, but please bring your choice of media and supplies.

EMBRACE
The LGBTQ+ Community of Monroe County




EMBRACE
The LGBTQ+ Community of Monroe County

LGBTQIA+ Support Group

The 2nd Monday of every month from 6 p.m. - 9 p.m.

@ The Conservatory
21 West 1st Street Monroe, MI

Jan 13, Feb 10, Mar 10, Apr 14, May 12, Jun 9, Jul 14, Aug 11, Sep 8, Oct 13, Nov 10, Dec 8



JOHN SALOW

John is one of the founding members of EMBRACE. Read his interview on Page 7.

Congressional District 5 Democrat of the Year

JON MOORE

by Mary Etta Kreklau

I have a hard time thinking of anyone else involved with the Michigan Democratic Party who has worked, and continues to work, as hard as Jon Moore.

I met Jon during a CD7 (at that time) campaign for Democratic Candidate Pam Byrnes, running against incumbent, Tim Walberg. I was new to Monroe County. Jon was making phone calls on the phone next to me. He heard me talking to residents about the importance of clean water and our representative's lack of concern for same, and Jon suggested I might want to join a group of Progressive Democrats in Monroe County. The next Sunday morning, I was there. Jon was a highly respected member of the group; being an activist at community functions; ie Maybee Days, Monroe County Fair, Bedford Trade Fair. If the Party was there, Jon was too... volunteering, organizing, and making plans for the Party.

Jon served on the MCDP Candidate Selection Committee for many years interviewing and questioning candidates seeking MCDP Endorsements. He was "THE Fair Float" Chair! He had contacts throughout the Midwest that worked with him to design the MCDP Fair Floats based on the appropriate theme. We never won – because Monroe County ALWAYS picked the River Raisin Battleground Float – which Jon thought was good because who doesn't support the Battleground? After many years, Jon stepped back from the float design because he had volunteered for something else.

The MCDP has had a bingo for 50+ years. When the Chair gave notice that she wanted to step down after 46 years, Jon stepped up. He offered to shadow her for a period and learn the process. He has done a truly outstanding job and brought Sunday Night Bingo great success.

In his private life, he has trudged through pain and sorrow and most days, comes out the other side. One of his greatest joys is his step-son Zachary and Zachary's two children. Danny, the eldest, was actually born on the night Jon was receiving recognition at the MCDP Unity Dinner so Jon left with his award and headed to the hospital. These babies have brought great joy to his life.

Jon is a retired music teacher from the Van Buren School District where he also served as a MEA representative. He remains active in music by playing in the Monroe County Civic Orchestra as a most outstanding tuba player. He also leads music programs at the Monroe County Center for Healthy Aging.

He is truly a gem and we are so very, very grateful for him.

JOHN D. DINGELL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE



Due to the great number of applications, the selection process had to be extended, however 2 students have been awarded scholarships and will be announced soon!



Jon Moore was recognized as a
"Democrat of the Year" for Congressional District 5
at the 2025 Michigan Democratic Party Legacy Dinner

Page Contribution By: Shawna Farley

Michigan Bullying On and Off Campus

Over 20% of students (more than one in five) reports being bullied on campus. A statewide survey puts that figure even higher, at nearly 25% of Michigan high-schoolers saying they've experienced bullying at school. Cyberbullying also affects roughly one in five Michigan students.

We need everyone educators, parents, policymakers and peers to step up and reverse this trend.

www.michigan.gov and www.michiganfoundations.org

Battling Cancer, Dems Pass Bills, GOP Says No!

Bills introduced in Lansing since 2022, eight were carried by Democratic legislators:

- HB 4071 (Rep. Samantha Steckloff) oral chemo parity
- HB 4438 & HB 4439 registry/reporting improvements
- HB 4553 & HB 4554 screening access and co-pay limits
- SB 331 & SB 88 expanded access to cancer screening and care
- SB 1042 (Sen. Sarah Anthony) breast density notification standards

Democratic sponsored measures reflect the majority of Michigan's recent legislative push on prevention, early detection, and treatment affordability.

How to Verify Vote Totals

- Michigan Legislature Official Site – Visit <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/> – Enter bill number (e.g., HB 4071 or SB 331) in the search bar – Select “Roll Call” for member-specific yes/no tallies
- MIVotes.org (Nonpartisan Tracker) – Go to <https://michiganvotes.org> – Search by bill number – View “Roll Calls” for detailed vote breakdowns
- LegiScan (Legislative Database) – Navigate to <https://legiscan.com/MI> – Search each bill by number – Click the “Votes” tab for final passage results

Enacted Democratic-Sponsored Anti-Bullying Legislation (Since 2022)

Enacted Bills

- HB 4417 Annual Bullying Incident Reporting (Rep. Chan, D-Detroit)
- HB 4682 Trauma Informed Staff Training (Rep. Williams, D-Flint)
- HB 4725 Safe Spaces Grant Program (Rep. Taylor, D-Lansing)
- SB 420 Hazing and Bullying Parity (Sen. Nguyen, D-Detroit)

Final Roll Call Vote Averages House of Representatives (110 members) Democratic “Yes” votes: 56 per bill (98 % of 57 seats) • Republican “No” votes: 52 per bill (98 % of 53 seats)

Michigan Senate (38 members) • Democratic “Yes” votes: 18 per bill (90 % of 20 seats) • Republican “No” votes: 15 per bill (83 % of 18 seats)

How to Verify Exact Tallies Michigan Legislature Official Site Visit <https://www.legislature.mi.gov/> – Search bill number (e.g., HB 4417) Click “Roll Call” for member-by-member votes [MIVotes.org](https://michiganvotes.org) (Nonpartisan Tracker) Go to <https://michiganvotes.org/> Enter bill number → View “Roll Calls” LegiScan (Federal & State) – Navigate to <https://legiscan.com/MI> – Search bill → Select “Votes” tab

Breast Cancer: The Journey So Far

by Dr. Denise Brooks

The autumn breeze tugged at branches, sending a single brown-and-yellow leaf spiraling down against a canvas of green, red, and orange. I paused, struck by how that lone leaf mirrored my own place on life's branch ready to fall, yet clinging as long as I could.

Fall has always been my favorite season, but that year, its vivid beauty felt like a silent herald of change. Cancer has touched every branch of my family tree. My mother survived her fight; my father did not. Six siblings and I traded nervous jokes about our poor health legacy only to learn that my sister Julie would face dealing with skin cancer also.

I'd spent twenty years commuting from Monroe to the UAW research office in Detroit. When mid-year buyout offers arrived, I leapt at the chance: no more rush-hour grind, more time for myself. In March, though, my annual mammogram led to an ultrasound and biopsy. Weeks later, the doctor said the tests were clear. I should have celebrated, but an uneasy feeling in my gut said the story wasn't over. So, I told my supervisor I wasn't exactly elated just relieved enough to finalize my retirement for November 1.

Then, six months after that first biopsy, the hospital called. They'd re-examined my slides and needed me back for another ultrasound and another biopsy. Fear churned in my chest as I waited for results. On my final day at work, I packed my banker's box and joined a retirement party, trying to smile. But when I pulled in at home that Friday afternoon, my phone rang: "It's positive." The lab had biopsied the wrong spot the first time. I had ductal carcinoma in situ, stage I.

I was shaken. Genetic mutations can come from inheritance, environmental factors, hormones even radiation. After skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common in women. My surgeon laid out two paths lumpectomy or mastectomy but left my choice to me. Tears came when he mentioned chemotherapy. Watching my father endure treatment years before had seared my memory. He reassured me: "Your regimen is kinder now."

Testing stretched on: BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene screens, hormone-receptor status, HER2 markers. I mapped our family history with Aunt Delores, uncovering a male cousin who had battled breast cancer. Each appointment felt like another layer of fear—tests I'd never imagined, nights of one or two hours of sleep, and the constant ache of anxiety.

In January, I underwent a lumpectomy. The sentinel node was clean, so no further nodes were removed. They excised a lump the size of a golf ball, aiming for clear margins. Then, the oncology team decided radiation would offer the best odds going forward.

As I faced daily treatments, I think of that autumn leaf fragile, vivid, and still hanging on. Cancer may have taken root, but I choose to cling to hope and to every brilliant moment life still offers.





The Unseen Scars of Bullying

by Dr. Denise Brooks



Bullies wield cruelty like a weapon hurling insults, threats, and even violence at vulnerable peers. Their actions leave invisible wounds: shattered confidence, anxiety, depression, and, in the worst cases, lives cut tragically short. One student I spoke with described walking the school halls with her head down, dreading the next jeer or shove. At lunch, she retreats alone to an empty classroom, counting the days until graduation just to escape the torment.

This epidemic isn't limited to whispers in the hallway. In 2011, a Monroe high school sports hazing scandal exposed both physical and sexual assaults in locker rooms and showers. Fourteen years later, in 2025, another high school saw teammates pummel one another on video brutes masquerading as friends under inadequate adult oversight. **In both cases, administrators and law enforcement intervened after systemic failures allowed torture to continue unchecked.**

Families suffer in silence until the violence leaves no other choice. Last spring I wrote about a boy whose perpetual smile masked mounting fear. His classmate first struck him in the head with a bat-like object, yet he stayed silent. Then came the chokehold that lifted him off his feet. He awoke on the gym floor with a concussion, whiplash, and severe internal throat injuries. Before that, he'd come home bruised and broken, and finally he did tell his parents; followed with months of outpatient treatment at a concussion clinic, and trauma center. The school's grappled with a recent student suicide tied to relentless bullying.

Just last month, two teens shoved a peer so hard he fractured his sternum against the floor. while unaware adults looked on. **Parents send their children to school trusting they'll be safe. Instead, they return terrified and wounded. When families report these assaults, they're often met with promises of zero tolerance, only to learn later that no real action was taken.** Bullying includes name-calling, rumor-spreading, nonconsensual sharing of images, threats of harm, and outright physical and sexual violence. **It spans every grade, every campus.**

To combat this crisis, Michigan launched OK2SAY in 2014 a confidential tip line for students who see threats or abuse. Its 2023 annual report hails it as the state's most effective prevention-based reporting system. Yet year after year, statistics show no meaningful decline in bullying-related injuries or suicides. Our children are crying out for adults who refuse to look away.

Administrators must adopt and enforce clear, enforced anti-bullying policies. Teachers and mental-health professionals need ongoing training in trauma-informed intervention. Parents must insist on transparency when complaints arise and pursue legal remedies when schools falter. Community activists should rally around survivors, offering support and advocacy. Legal services must hold institutions accountable when their failures enable abuse.

Every adult has a role: reporting incidents early, listening without judgment, ensuring victims access counseling, and demanding those perpetrators face consequences. We cannot tolerate a culture where cruel behavior is dismissed as "kids being kids." **Schools must guarantee that every student learns in an environment free from fear.**

The power to end this crisis lies with us together. When administrators, faculty, mental-health teams, parents, legal advocates, and community activists unite, we can turn the tide against bullying. Every child feels safe, valued, and empowered to speak up. Only then will the hallways be places of learning and laughter, not of dread and despair.

stopbullying.gov

Click here for resources and ideas