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RMI event offers free mammograms for up to 50 women Saturday; registration still open

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By Kris Turner | The Flint Journal
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FLINT — Donita Potts hasn't had a mammogram in 2 1/2 years.

She worries that a lump in her breast doctors were watching might have turned into cancer.

But since her husband lost his job — and the family's health insurance — about three years ago, Potts, 49, of Lennon said she can't afford the screening.

She's employed but doesn't have insurance through her job.

"I used to do them when I had insurance, every year to year and a half by the time I would get it scheduled," she said. "There was a time I had to get them every six months — I had a spot they were watching. It turned out fine, but that's always in the back of my mind."

Potts is having a mammogram Saturday, compliments of Regional Medical Imaging, which is providing free screenings for up to 50 unemployed or uninsured women in the area.

Genesee County was hit hard by the recession and General Motors' woes, which caused scores of people to lose their insurance or jobs, said Rob McColgan, executive director of RMI.

"We recognize the economic problems with downsizing and people losing their insurance," McColgan said. "Frankly, we're still concerned with the potential for breast cancer in the area."

Women should have mammograms at least once a year after they turn 40, he said. At RMI, the cost of a mammogram out of pocket is \$99 — a figure that can be daunting for women struggling to make ends meet.

"There have been reports that screening percentages are down slightly in the population, and we want to draw more attention to it," McColgan said. "We want to do our part so people who don't have access can get it."

Dr. Randy Hicks of RMI and Dr. Nancy Kursik, a family practice physician in Grand Blanc, have volunteered their services if patients need a more in-depth exam or further screening.

"Everyone in Flint knows it's been really rough economywise, and one of the things we wanted to do was give back to the community," Hicks said.

More should be done to shed light on women who don't have access to the screenings, Potts said.

"It has to be provided," she said. "These tests are outrageously expensive. Thankfully, places like RMI are doing this for the community."

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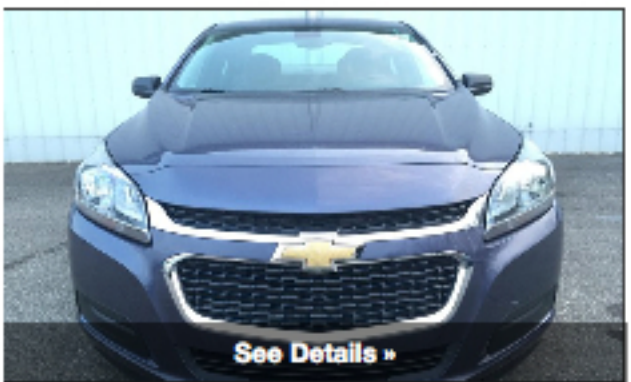
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