Tampa Bay Super Bowl LV Committee Pledges $150,000 to Cancer Care

The gift signifies the NFL's longstanding commitment to equitable cancer care.

February 5, 2021 By Caroline Tien

In honor of the 55th Super Bowl, the Tampa Bay Super Bowl LV Host Committee and the American Cancer Society (ACS) have teamed up to raise awareness of the critical importance of cancer screening. The partnership is part of the National Football League's (NFL) Crucial Catch program, an initiative launched in 2009 to "fight cancer through early detection and risk reduction," according to the NFL's website.

Cancer screenings have dropped by a staggering 90% since the beginning of the pandemic, provoking concern among members of the medical community. In June, Norman E. Sharpless, the director of the National Cancer Institute, estimated that an additional 10,000 cancer deaths could occur in the next decade as a result of the decline.

"The pandemic has only further exacerbated the challenges that so many in our community experience," Sherí Barros, the ACS's strategic director of global sports alliances, said in a Tampa Bay press release.

To mitigate its impact, the Tampa Bay Super Bowl LV Host Committee has donated $120,000 to the ACS's Tampa Hope Lodge program, which provides people in active cancer treatment with food and shelter free of charge, and will donate an additional $30,000 to the Community Health Centers of Pinellas (CHCP), a not-for-profit health care organization that serves the residents of Pinellas County. Whites and, to a lesser extent, Blacks and Hispanics account for the majority of the population.

The funding will enable CHCP to provide cancer screening services such as Pap smears, mammograms and colonoscopies to locals "regardless of their ability to pay," Nichelle Threadgill, MD, CHCP's chief medical officer, told The Tampa Bay Times. This year, colorectal cancer alone is expected to kill 52,980 people in the United States.

"At the American Cancer Society, we firmly believe that no one should be disadvantaged in their fight against cancer. The generous contribution by the Tampa Bay Super Bowl LV Host Committee and the NFL will help us close the disparity gap experienced by communities of color," Barros said.

Black and Latino people are statistically less likely to survive most cancer diagnoses compared with white people. This trend, the American Cancer Society noted, holds true regardless of sex. Black women 40 and over have a 40% to 50% higher chance of dying of breast cancer than white women, and Black men are more than twice as likely to die of prostate cancer than men of other races. In acknowledgment of this state of affairs, the Tampa Bay press release began with a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health care is the most shocking and inhumane.”

For more on the intersection of football and cancer care, check out articles filed under the tag “Football.” For more on Black women and breast cancer, read “Race Heavily Impacts Breast Cancer Prevention and Care.” And for more on Black men and prostate cancer, read “African-American Men More Likely to Die From Low-Grade Prostate Cancer.”

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