



# CountyLines

NATIONAL BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

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## Task forces to tackle priorities for 2010-11

NCACC President Joe Bryan has a personal goal this year to run a marathon. That is a fitting goal for this year because the Association will have to hit the ground running to meet President Bryan's ambitious agenda for his term as president.

To help meet those challenges, the Wake County commissioner has appointed a mix of veterans and newcomers to round out his Board of Directors for 2010-11. Among Bryan's 17 appointments are two past presidents – Kitty Barnes of Catawba County (Legislative Goals Committee co-chair) and Terry Garrison of Vance County (at-large director) – and several other members who have previously served on the Board of Directors.

In a change from tradition, Bryan appointed chairs to each of the seven steering committees (previously, the president elect and first and second vice presidents each chaired a committee). Among the committee chairs are Person County Vice Chair Jimmy Clayton (Environment), Edgecombe County Commissioner Viola Harris (Public Education),

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Eli Arroyo-Allen, Public Information Officer/Administrative Officer II for Moore County, is a two-year survivor of breast cancer and one of five national "Pink Together Survivor Ambassadors." She appears on an assortment of packaging for General Mills brand foods this month as part of a national campaign to spread the word about breast cancer awareness.

Photo by Jason King

## Battle with cancer opens a new door

By Jason King  
Assistant Communications Director

Almost two years after receiving the phone call informing her that a lump removed from her breast was indeed cancerous, Eli Arroyo-Allen is now heeding the call to help others who are experiencing the fear, pain and doubt that she felt as she embarked upon the battle of her life.

As public information officer for Moore County, Arroyo-Allen is used to being the face and voice for a county. After learning of her story, General Mills decided it wanted to make Arroyo-Allen one of the faces of its national campaign for National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Beginning in September, boxes of Fiber One, Cheerios and other General Mills brands began to show up on retail shelves carrying the photo of Arroyo-Allen and four other "Pink Together Survivor Ambassadors."

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Early detection of cancer is often the key to successfully diagnosing and treating breast cancer.

Visit [www.nbcam.org](http://www.nbcam.org) for more information.



And she has taken it one step farther, founding her own program called "Loving Life/Amando La Vida," which is designed to support Latina women in what can be a lonely battle with breast cancer.

"During those times when I just sat in waiting rooms for hours and hours I would notice that a lot of minority groups like the Hispanics really didn't have as much support," she said. "I could see that they were struggling with the language barrier, and that's where this concept came to mind because I can reach them since I speak Spanish."

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## Partnerships, education never more important

State budget deficit creates greater need for spreading the word about county government

Five years ago, the NCACC Board of Directors approved a long-range plan that included five separate and distinct strategic goals. Those goals were designed to carry this Association into our second century of existence, and they could not have been more on target.

One of the goals is to improve the state-county partnership by strengthening the relationship between the state and counties. Since the goals were approved in 2005, every president has done his or her best to help us meet this goal.

We have heard from Cabinet appointees, Council of State members and numerous state legislators.

It is refreshing to say that state leaders have embraced our efforts. In mid-September, Executive Director David F. Thompson and I met with Governor Beverly Perdue to discuss the upcoming state budget and its potential impacts on local governments. We were joined in the meeting by representatives from the N.C. League of Municipalities.

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President's Perspective  
by Joe Bryan



Governor Perdue met a small group of local government officials and NCACC and NCLM representatives, including NCACC Executive Director David F. Thompson and President Joe Bryan of Wake County, on Sept. 15.

Photo courtesy Matt Lail/NCLM



## Arroyo-Allen

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With the help of friends, Arroyo-Allen, who is of Cuban descent, holds group meetings in Moore County and in her hometown of Miami to help spread the word about the importance of self-examinations, mammograms and other detection methods for breast cancer, and to let women know of available support.

Another initiative of her "Loving Life/Amando La Vida" program attempts to provide patients with a smile during a painful period. She is attempting to have her "caring cards" included in a booklet of information that new breast cancer patients receive.

"You get there and you're so stressed already and they give you this booklet," she said. "And you open it up and it's 'How are you going to feel? Horrible.' It's how the chemo is going to knock you off your feet. ... You're looking at this and you're wondering, 'Am I even going to make it?'"

"All I want is one thing that's going to make me smile. So I had these cards created."

Smiles were hard to come by for Arroyo-Allen and her family on Dec. 16, 2008. On the day she was preparing to see her husband David, a Navy officer based at Fort Bragg, deployed for a year, she received a phone call informing her that the matter removed via biopsy several days earlier was indeed cancerous.

"At the time they really weren't sure

how advanced or what type, what stage, but that they wanted to go ahead and set me up as soon as possible to go see the surgeon," she said. "I got that news that morning and we're driving to Virginia in the afternoon for my husband to leave."

She immediately began researching her options and preparing herself for the battle ahead.

As she learned more about the disease, she returned to her hometown of Miami to begin a macrobiotic diet, which involves sticking to a diet consisting of grains, beans and vegetables and avoiding processed foods.

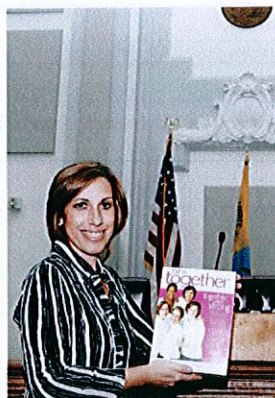
"I wanted to just cleanse my system and get a lot of energies from my nutrition," she said. "Preparing my system for this was very effective."

Less than a week after having a lumpectomy, Arroyo-Allen was back at the surgeon's office for a lymph node dissection after learning that some of the cancer had spread. The second surgery was "a lot more trying" than the first.

With her husband unable to delay his deployment, her son Jordan, a student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, became her primary supporter through a grueling period that included 36 radiation treatments. But even with the support of her son, mother, cousins and girlfriends, Arroyo-Allen said she turned inward to her faith for ultimate support.

"Some things you have to do alone," she said.

Every person who suffers through



County Manager Cary McSwain returned from a trip to Wal-Mart in late September with a case of Fiber One boxes that featured Arroyo-Allen and the four other "Pink Together Survivor Ambassadors" on the back.

Photo by Jason King

a battle with cancer needs a support group, however. Part of Arroyo-Allen's support and therapy came from sharing her story via a blog and updates on Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. A friend encouraged her to also get involved on pinktogether.com – General Mills' online community for breast cancer survivors. She shared her story and began receiving encouragement and offering the same to others. In October 2009, she received an

e-mail from General Mills asking if she would be interested in becoming a Pink Together Ambassador.

After a handful of phone conversations and an hour-and-a-half long phone interview, she learned she had been chosen as one of the five ambassadors for 2010. She flew to Minneapolis in January for the photo shoot and to share stories.

One day in September, she received a phone call from Moore County Manager Cary McSwain.

"Cary calls me and says 'I am at Wal-Mart and I am looking at you,'" she said. "He shows up [at the office] with a whole case of Fiber One. So in any given office in this building, there is my box."

Through the campaign, Arroyo-Allen has had the opportunity to reach a broad audience. A General Mills corporate public relations team has handled various interview requests during a busy October, which included front-page stories in *The Pilot* of Southern Pines and *The Fayetteville Observer*.

Arroyo-Allen said that letting others – particularly Latina women – know that they have local support is her way of giving back. She said she hopes that her experiences encourage others to become more aware of the warning signs of a change in health and the importance of early detection through exams.

"For me the biggest lesson you learn is to listen to your body," she said. "And if you learn your body, you know when there's a sign of trouble. I'm kind of more in tune with what is going on."



## SHEDDING LIGHT ON BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES IN NORTH CAROLINA.

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- Help bringing the right experts to each unique situation including the NC Department of Commerce, Regional Partnerships, USDA Rural Development, NC Rural Economic Development Center and NC Economic Developers Association

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