

FRANKLIN COUNTY RELAY FOR LIFE



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THE FRANKLIN TIMES ★★★ THURSDAY, APRIL 23, 2026 ★★★ SECTION B



OVER 40 YEARS OF RELAY. Walkers during the 2025 Relay for Life; below, David Benton prepares torches for the luminary service.



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**Friday, April 24, 2026
FRANKLINTON HIGH SCHOOL**

- 6 p.m.
Opening Ceremonies/Welcome Invocation, National Anthem
- 6:15 p.m.
Survivor Lap & Caregiver Lap Sponsor & Team Lap
- 7:30 p.m.
Announce 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Place best Superhero Costume for Adults and Kids
- 8:45 p.m.
Luminary Service & Memorial Walk
**Please remain quiet during this time.
* Please DO NOT take down your tent decoration until after the Closing Ceremony**
- 9:45 p.m.
Closing Ceremony Present Certificates for the best campsites.
- 10 p.m. – Clean-Up



SURVIVOR DINNER BACK INSIDE. Survivors, caregivers and volunteers enjoyed food and fellowship during this year's Relay for Life cancer survivor dinner, held at Franklinton High School. Volunteers from left: Ebony Cotton, Hope Benton and Cornette Cheatham greets guests.

A message from Franklin Co. Relay for Life

Dear Citizens of Franklin County,

On behalf of the Relay for Life of Franklin County, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your generous donations, unwavering support, and participation in our Relay for Life event held in Franklinton, North Carolina.

As we enter 2026, we are proud to celebrate more than 40 years of Relay for Life—four decades filled with hope, remembrance, and action in the fight against cancer.

Your time, energy, and compassion continue to strengthen our community. This event's success is made possible by your dedication, generosity, and enthusiasm. We are especially thankful for the prayers, participation, and commitment shown by so many. Even beyond the event, teams



**Danette Cheatham,
Volunteer Event Chair**

continue fundraising efforts, and we remain inspired by the caregivers and volunteers who faithfully support and honor the memory of loved ones lost.

Relay for Life represents the collective effort of a community united by a shared cause—because cancer has touched

us all. Through research, education, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and recovery support, the American Cancer Society continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those affected by cancer. Your contributions truly matter and help save lives.

In these challenging times, the mission of the American Cancer Society is more important than ever. We remain committed to advancing groundbreaking research and providing essential support to patients and their families. Cancer has not stopped—and neither have we.

Without your continued support, cancer wins. But together, we are saving lives.

We extend a special thank you to our dedicated Relay committee, whose tireless efforts reflect the heart and soul of this event. To our care-

givers, we offer our deepest appreciation—your compassion ensures that patients have transportation to appointments, nourishing meals, and, most importantly, comfort and companionship during difficult times.

Relay for Life is a time to celebrate, remember, and fight back. We celebrate the strength and resilience of cancer survivors. We honor the caregivers who give selflessly. And we remember those we have lost, whose memories continue to inspire our commitment to this cause. With every lap walked, we honor their lives and renew our determination to find a cure.

This event is about HOPE—the hope for a future where cancer no longer exists. Our survivors embody that hope and inspire those who are still in the fight.

This year's theme,

“Cancer is No Match for Us” (Superheroes/Avengers), reminds us that together, we are stronger. Like superheroes, we unite to celebrate survivors, remember loved ones, and fight back against cancer with courage and determination.

We are deeply grateful to all Relay for Life volunteers who worked tirelessly to make this event possible. We also extend our sincere appreciation to our corporate sponsors for their generous support. Special thanks to Donna and the staff of *The Franklin Times* for their continued dedication as our official event reporter.

We would also like to recognize and thank Sheriff Kevin White and the Sheriff's Department, Franklinton High School and Principal Dr. David C. Westbrook, Franklin County Schools, Down

East Tent Rentals, Holley Durham (Senior Development Manager II), Lena's Catering, DJ Mark Speed, and all others who contributed to the success of this event.

Most importantly, we honor our survivors—your strength and courage inspire us every day. Because of you, we remain committed to a future free from cancer.

Thank you again, citizens of Franklin County. Your continued support brings us one step closer to winning the fight against cancer in our lifetime.

We look forward to seeing you at the Relay for Life event!

With heartfelt gratitude,

Danette Cheatham
Volunteer Event Relay
for Life Chair

2026 Relay Committee

Danette Cheatham - Chair of Event
Accounting Advocacy
William Perry, Sr. - Logistics
Mildred M. Cheatham - Survivor Chair
Cornelius Cheatham - Logistics Chair
Delphenia Livingston - Survivor Committee
Barbara Alston - Sherriff Dept &
Gators for Event Luminaria
Debra Brodie - Survivor Committee,
Marketing, Silent Auction
Susie Davis - Survivor Committee
Barbara Terrell - Survivor Committee

Clara Alston - Survivor Committee
Hope Benton - Luminaria Chair
Ericka Alston - Sponsorship
Danielle Benton - Luminaria
Armenta Eaton - Historian & Survivor
Committee
Mary Fogg - Survivor Committee
Cornette Cheatham - Survivor Committee
Julie Southerland - Activities for the
Kidz & Schools
Ricky Kearney - Logistics

2026 Relay for Life Teams & Captains

South Main Street Relayers - Marylin Keith
Concord Missionary Baptist Church -
Danette Cheatham
Haywood Missionary Baptist Church -
Erica Alston
Centerville Baptist Church - Ning Auton
Perry's Missionary Baptist Church -
Barbara Alston
Franklin County Sheriff Office - Kevin White
Shady Grove Baptist Church -
Delphenia Livingston
Concerned Women For Justice Of
Franklin County - Armenta Eaton
Walnut Grove Missionary Baptist Church -
Jackie Rogers
Rowland Chapel Christian Church -
LaTrenda Hawkins
Pilot Missionary Baptist Church -
Sherry Newell
Mitchiner's Grove Baptist Church -
Milltrene Newell
Mitchell Missionary Baptist Church -
Gloria Foster
Franklinton High School (FHS) -
Julie Southerland
New Hope Freedom and Deliverance
Cathedral - Veronica McEachin-Davis

Nelson Chapel Baptist Church -
Cora Campbell
Bunn Elementary School - Whitney Lowery
Nu Epsilon - Georgia Young
Franklin County ELT - Hope Benton
Mt. Moriah Family and Friends -
Debra Brodie
CRUDUP'S - Tonya Crudup
Freedom Life of Henderson NC -
Bettie Perry
Team Diane - Teresa Edwards
FUMC "Staying Alive"- Linda Frederickson
Union Grove Missionary Baptist Church -
Ricky Kearney
Bunn Middle School - Demetria Moore
Youngville Elementary School -
Toni Bowden
Wardrick Warriors - Betty Lowe
Old Liberty Missionary Baptist Church -
Dazale Kearney
MPH-Franklin Happy Healers -
Jessica Evans
Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church -
Jessica Bland
Edward Best Elementary School -
Katelyn Dwyer
Allen Chapel Baptist Church - Terre Gill

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Survivor stays strong with faith & family

By Matasha Kersey

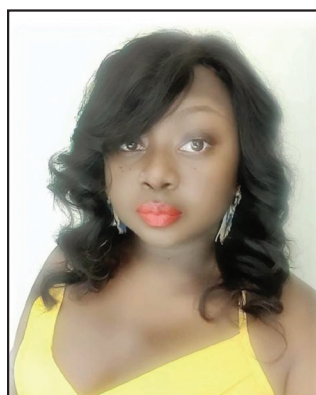
I am someone who places deep importance on my family, my relationship with God, and becoming the best version of myself. These values guide the way I move through life and influence the choices I make every day. My parents, George E. Kersey and Venise A. Kersey, raised me to stay grounded, grateful, and committed to living with purpose. With two brothers and three sisters, family has always been at the center of my life, shaping who I am and what I stand for. My faith community is also a major part of my foundation- I am a proud member of Rowland Chapel Christian Church, where I continue to grow spiritually and stay connected to people who inspire and support me.

Education has played a meaningful role in my journey as well. I graduated from Southern Vance

High School in 1996 and went on to attend Fayetteville State University from 1996 to 2000. Those years helped me mature, build confidence, and understand the importance of discipline, responsibility, and perseverance.

A major part of my story is my strength. I have been a cancer survivor for three years, an experience that tested my faith, my courage, and my determination. Overcoming that challenge reminded me of the power of prayer, the importance of family support, and the resilience I carry within me. It changed the way I see life and deepened my commitment to living with gratitude and purpose.

I also enjoy the things that bring joy and connection into my life- like cheering on the Pittsburgh Steelers and sharing laughter with the people around me. I love to laugh and make others laugh too, because humor helps me build stronger relation-



Matasha Kersey

ships and brings light into even the toughest moments. One of the roles I cherish most is being a devoted aunt and godmother to many. Supporting, guiding, and loving the young people in my life gives me a deep sense of purpose and pride.

As I continue to learn and evolve, my goal is to live in a way that honors my beliefs, reflects the values my family and faith have instilled in me, and allows me to make a positive impact on everyone I meet.

Annual health checkups can be vital to cancer prevention

Annual health checkups are so vital that many insurance providers offer once-yearly wellness visits free of charge to policy holders. It's important for people to get annual physicals even if they feel fit and healthy, as these yearly visits can help uncover issues that may not be producing symptoms. Annual wellness visits also afford adults an opportunity to discuss their lifestyle with their physicians, which can identify areas where changes might be necessary with a goal toward improving long-term health.

Yearly health checkups also provide an opportunity to learn about key screenings, especially those that may detect for cancer. But industry surveys indicate far too many adults aren't taking this vital step. A 2024 survey from the Prevent Cancer Foundation found that 39 percent of surveyed adults had not had a routine medical appointment in the previous 12 months. That's a troubling finding and one that could be more costly than adults realize, as the PCF reports that as many as 50 percent

of cancer cases and half of all cancer deaths are preventable. Screening for cancer, a process that often begins with discussions during annual wellness checkups, is a life-saving and typically non-intrusive way to detect the disease at its earliest, most treatable stage, a point in most cancer instances when symptoms are not necessarily present or noticeable.

Annual checkups also offer patients an opportunity to discuss lifestyle changes that can decrease their cancer risk. Some adults may not recognize that their existing lifestyle is increasing their cancer risk. For example, the American Cancer Society notes that a sedentary lifestyle, a diet lacking in sufficient nutrition and excessive alcohol consumption all can increase a person's cancer risk. Annual wellness visits provide an excellent opportunity for adults to discuss their lifestyle with their physicians, who may recommend some potentially life-saving tweaks that can greatly reduce a person's risk for cancer.



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Cancer journey finds purpose

"An unforgettable moment, grounded in purpose." That's how Tara Williamson, owner of Pink Ink Tattoo in Louisburg describes her recent trip to Los Angeles. Williamson, a breast cancer survivor, has turned her breast cancer journey into helping others. As the founder of Pink

Ink Tattoo in Louisburg, she turned her cancer experience into advocacy. She gives women that finishing touch to the long and emotional journey of breast cancer, restoring their confidence and helping them feel whole again. Pink Ink Tattoo, helps post-mastectomy clients regain

a natural appearance with realistic areola complex, 3D nipple tattoos, and scar camouflage and could be covered under insurance. Williamson explains her recent trip to Los Angeles as one of the five finalists for the Remarkable Women of the Year initiative, calling it truly unforgettable, and she said she was grateful for the opportunity to use this platform for something so meaningful. She was nominated and won locally through Nextstar Media/CBS17. After winning locally, she went to Nashville and was one of 125 nationwide winners (out of 12,000) and then was chosen to be one of the top five regional winners. Williamson was flown to Los Angeles and filmed at the Warner Bros. Studios on *The Jennifer Hudson Show* that will be airing May 18. She returned home and filmed a segment for *My Carolina* which aired earlier this month. "Filming on Stage 3 at Warner Bros. Studios for *The Jennifer Hudson Show* gave me the chance to speak about something deeply

personal and important with areola tattooing, breast cancer awareness, and the life changing value of post-reconstructive options for survivors like myself." Williamson emphasizes. "This work is more than medical tattooing. It is healing. It is restoration. It is the final touch many women have been waiting for." "This moment was about more than television, it was about elevating a conversation that deserves to be seen, heard, and honored," Williamson concludes. In addition to the many hours of work at Pink Ink, Williamson recently started the non-profit Pink Ink Promise Foundation, and has written a book, "Finding My Gift Through My Breast Cancer Journey." She also has written a bill that will help breast cancer survivors with areola tattooing and not have to fight insurance. That bill will be on Capital Hill the end of April. She is continually meeting with local Senators and Congressmen. Williamson's remarkable journey continues, and isn't slowing down anytime soon.



REMARKABLE JOURNEY. Pink Ink owner Tara Williamson poses in front of *The Jennifer Hudson Show* studio. The Remarkable Women of the Year segment airs May 18.

Breast cancer basics

Breast cancer is a formidable disease that affects millions of individuals each year. The impact of breast cancer goes beyond those diagnosed with the disease, affecting friends, family members, professional colleagues, and others as well. That far-reaching impact means everyone has a vested interest in learning about breast cancer.

What is breast cancer? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention notes breast cancer occurs when cells in the breast grow out of control. The breast is made up of three main parts known as the lobules, ducts and connective tissue, and which type of breast cancer a person has depends on which cells in the breast turn into cancer.

Is there a typical breast cancer?

No two individuals diagnosed with breast cancer will have the same experience after being diagnosed. However, the CDC notes that most breast cancers begin in the ducts or lobules. The ducts are tubes that carry milk to the nipple and the lobules are the glands that produce milk.

What are some common risk factors for breast cancer?

The National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc. notes gender is the foremost risk factor for breast cancer, as the WHO reports that 99 percent of breast cancers occur in women. Additional risk factors for breast cancer include age, with two out of three women diagnosed with invasive breast cancer being

older than 55, and race, as the disease affects more Caucasian women than women of other races. The NBCF also notes that women who have dense breast tissue may be at greater risk for breast cancer because such tissue can make it harder to detect lumps.

What causes breast cancer?

The NBCF notes that most women who have breast cancer will never be able to identify an exact cause behind their disease. Common risk factors like gender and age are beyond women's control, but there are some controllable risk factors that can be avoided. The WHO notes that overconsumption of alcohol and tobacco use are two such factors.

How important is early detection?

The American Cancer Society reports that the five-year survival rate for breast cancers discovered in the localized stage is 99 percent. That underscores the significance of early detection. The NBCF notes monthly breast self-exams and routine clinical exams increase the likelihood of early detection. Women are urged to speak with their physicians regarding how frequently they should be tested, as recommendations vary depending on each individual and their respective family histories.

The basics of breast cancer provide insight into the disease and what women can do to reduce their risk of developing it.

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Traditional Relay for Life survivor dinner returns



Cancer survivor and guest speaker, Matasha Kersey

HELPING OUT. Volunteers were all smiles during the first inside survivor dinner since COVID. The event was held at Franklinton High School last month. At left, front to back: Cornelius Cheatham, Cynthia Terrell, and Gloria Foster; right, front to back: Alice Richardson, Pam Alston, and Armenta Eaton.



Cynthia Williams and her mother / cancer survivor Ruby Williams



Kinsley Hockaday helps Danette Cheatham



Christian Johnson volunteers with Danette Cheatham



Volunteers Erica Alston (left) from Haywood Baptist Church and Julie Southerland from Franklinton High School



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Volunteers make a difference



FHS VOLUNTEERS. Franklinton High students helped out during the Relay for Life cancer survivor dinner. From left, Jakayla Jones, Payton Phillips, Cayden Shaw and Kassie Lorenzo.



HELPING OUT FOR A GREAT CAUSE. Above, long-time Relay volunteer Mildred Cheatham gives instructions to FHS volunteers. At right: volunteers Hope Benton and Jessica Evans stop long enough for a photo.



Lifestyle choices that could affect colorectal cancer outcomes

The World Health Organization reports that colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer worldwide, accounting for roughly 10 percent of all cancer cases each year.

Colorectal cancer also is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths across the globe. But colorectal cancer may not be as formidable a foe as those statistics suggest.

The American Institute for Cancer Research notes that lifestyle factors are among the main risk factors for colorectal cancer. Such factors are within individuals' control, and when individuals embrace healthy lifestyle choices, they might be able to improve outcomes in relation to a colorectal cancer diagnosis.

Physical activity

Routine physical activity has been linked to a wide range of healthy outcomes, including a reduced risk for chronic diseases and improved mental health. The AICR notes that people who are more physically active have better health outcomes after a colorectal cancer diagnosis than people who live a sedentary lifestyle.

While there's no guarantee such outcomes will improve by incorporating physical activity into a daily routine, the benefits of regular exercise are so profound that it can benefit anyone living a sedentary lifestyle to get up and move more frequently.

Diet

The AICR notes that people who eat more whole grains have better health outcomes after a colorectal cancer diagnosis. AICR research also indicates eating three servings of whole grains each day lowers a person's risk of colorectal cancer by 17 percent. The Mayo Clinic notes that whole grains include quinoa, brown rice, oatmeal, whole wheat flour, and popcorn. The AICR cautions that people who have been treated for colorectal cancer have reported difficulty consuming whole grains after treatment, including surgery. In such instances, a gradual reintroduction of whole grains under the supervision of a health professional can help people get back on track and reduce the need to consume refined grains.

Sugary drinks

Sugary drinks have been associated with a number of negative health outcomes, including overweight and obesity, each of which are risk factors for type 2 diabetes. The AICR also indicates people who consume less sugary drinks have better health outcomes after being diagnosed with colorectal cancer. The AICR recommends people consider reducing their consumption of sugary drinks.

Colorectal cancer is a common and often deadly form of the disease. But the right lifestyle choices may make a colorectal cancer diagnosis easier to overcome.

5 Star Rating ★★★★★

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Life after cancer: Wellness tips for survivors

Cancer is a prolific group of diseases that affects millions of people across the globe. The American Cancer Society indicates approximately 20 million cancer cases were newly diagnosed and 9.7 million people died from the disease worldwide in 2022.

The day successful cancer treatment ends is a cause for celebration. But the happiness that comes from a clean bill of health may soon be overshadowed by anxiety regarding what the future may bring. Many cancer survivors wonder what happens if the cancer comes back? These tips can help guide cancer survivors looking to protect their long-term health and overall well-being as they seek to reclaim their lives.

Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke, too
It's time to kick the tobacco habit. The Mayo Clinic warns



HEALTHY DIET. Maintain your good health by eating the right foods, including lots of veggies.

smoking or using chewing tobacco puts people at risk for several types of cancer. Quitting also lowers the risk of developing a second type of cancer. Smoking causes significant damage to the heart and blood vessels, increasing the risk of heart disease. Smoking impairs the body's immune system, making smokers more sus-

ceptible to infection. Quitting and avoiding secondhand smoke is instrumental to better health and longevity.

Embrace physical activity
Regular physical activity improves overall health for everyone, including cancer survivors. Exercise boosts energy and mobility and strengthens the immune system. Research suggests exercise is a natural way to boost the body's immune responses to reduce inflammation and vulnerability to illness. A gradual buildup of exercise tolerance helps people avoid injuries that can derail workout plans. The goal is to do 30 minutes or more of daily activity, plus strength activities two or more times a week, according to Siteman Cancer Center.

Watch alcohol consumption
Always consume alcohol

in moderation, if at all. That means no more than one drink a day for women, and no more than two for men. The Mayo Clinic notes it's hard to definitively say alcohol consumption causes cancer recurrence, but it can increase the risk of a second primary cancer.

Eat a healthy diet
A healthy diet for cancer survivors prioritizes consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and healthy fats, like olive oil. Protein sources should be lean, and consumption of red meat, processed foods and full-fat dairy should be limited. Avoid processed meats. According to the World Health Organization, the link between processed meats and cancer has been strongly established. Eating a healthy diet helps to control body weight, which also is an important step to maintaining health.

Talk to a professional
Prioritizing mental health also is important. Cancer survivors may need a little extra help working through their feelings, and utilizing a mental health professional can help. Surviving cancer is a monumental achievement. Remaining healthy after successful treatment requires commitment and a new approach to daily living.

Warning signs of skin cancer

The World Cancer Research Fund notes that skin cancer is the seventeenth most common cancer across the globe. Skin cancer is a global menace, but it might be a greater concern for some than others. The United States had the highest skin cancer incidence rate in 2022, while Canada had the eighth highest incidence rate of the disease of any country across the globe. Though no one is immune to cancer, Americans and Canadians may need to be especially vigilant if they hope to reduce their risk for the disease.

One of the steps anyone can take to improve their stance in the fight against skin cancer is to learn to spot signs and symptoms of the disease. The earlier cancer is diagnosed, the more treatable it is and the better the prognosis. The MD Anderson Cancer Center notes that skin cancer may not show clear physical signs at first, which can delay detection. But certain sensations affecting the skin, including itching, tenderness, pain, or a burning feeling, may indicate the presence of skin cancer. When early symptoms are visible, they may include:

- A new spot on the skin
 - Changes in an existing mole or spot that alter its size, shape or color
 - A shiny bump on the skin, which may be red or skin-colored
 - A rough, red patch that feels dry or scaly
 - A spot that itches or hurts
- The presence of any of these symptoms is not necessarily indicative of skin cancer, but they should be brought to the attention of a health care professional immediately. As skin cancer worsens, symptoms might change. In such instances, the MDACC notes a person can be on the lookout for various signs, including:
- A sore that does not heal
 - A raised bump with a center that bleeds or forms a scab
 - A bump that looks like a wart
 - A scar-like area with no clear edge
 - A mole that changes quickly or one that features uneven edges or colors

Anyone concerned about their skin cancer risk is urged to speak with a health care professional regarding what they can do to protect their skin. Additional information about skin cancer and its symptoms is available at mdanderson.org.

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