

## More Local Women Getting Mammograms



**Melanie Collett/Panhandle Health District**

Today, the Panhandle Health District (PHD) released the latest data regarding women receiving mammograms through the “Ask Me” program. Since 2012, mammograms have increased over 20% – from 359 women to 437 in Benewah and Shoshone Counties.

“Ask Me” is a community-based education program utilizing volunteer businesses to promote breast cancer screenings. Participating business owners and employees wear an apron or button that says “Ask Me” on it (*pictured above*). When someone inquires about what “Ask Me” is, volunteers hand them a card with more information about breast cancer screenings.

“We are thrilled to see an increase in the number of mammograms due to this program. It’s true that one little button can spark important conversations, says Program Coordinator, Tina Ghirarduzzi.

Sue Bates works at the Benewah Medical Center and says her “Ask Me” button has sparked many conversations about mammograms and local opportunities for women to get checked. Low Income women can go to Panhandle Health District to see if they qualify for screenings through the Women’s Health Check or Komen Programs. Sue says, “I actually had 2 referral cards filled out by people just Tuesday night! It’s an honor to spread the word – even when I am not at work, I want to let women know about the importance of mammograms.”

According to the American Cancer Society, annual mammograms are recommended starting at age 40 and clinical breast exams every three years for women in their 20’s and 30’s.

“More and more women are realizing that early detection is key,” Ghirarduzzi continues. “But there’s still a big battle ahead of us. Idaho has one of the lowest breast cancer screening rates in the nation at 63%, and it’s even lower in Benewah and Shoshone counties.”

PHD’s goal is to increase the mammogram rate by another 10% by this time next year. Any volunteers are invited to be a part of the “Ask Me” program. If you are interested in joining the fight, contact Tina Ghirarduzzi at (208) 415-5140.

