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## **Virtua Health to Unveil Mobile Health & Cancer Screening Vehicle on April 19**

*The \$1 million, customized van will enable six times as many screenings, including **free mammograms and other services** in underserved communities*

(MARLTON, N.J., April 17, 2023)...When Linda Curlis was unemployed and without health insurance, the Audubon Park resident couldn't afford the cost of a mammogram. But when Curlis learned she could get a free mammogram through Virtua Health, the then 59-year-old got the test. As a result, her breast cancer was caught early. She was successfully treated in 2021 and remains cancer-free. ([Read more of Curlis's moving story below.](#))

Now, Virtua—South Jersey's largest health care system—is introducing a **Mobile Health and Cancer Screening Unit**. This state-of-the-art vehicle will offer various cancer screenings and other services in local communities where they're needed most.

Operating four days a week, the 40-foot vehicle will enable Virtua to dramatically increase the number of cancer screenings it provides—**from 1,000 screenings in 2022 to more than 6,000 a year going forward**. For example, Virtua expects to **quadruple its mammograms**, from about 760 in 2022 to over 3,400 a year. The program will also provide screenings for cervical, prostate, and colorectal cancer, among other services.

"This innovative mobile program will help reduce health disparities in our region by increasing access to life-saving screenings and other vital services," said Dennis W. Pullin, FACHE, president and CEO of Virtua Health. "This is another example of Virtua and its partners and donors working together to build communities of wellness."

**MEDIA INVITE: Virtua will introduce the vehicle at a ceremonial rollout Wednesday, April 19, 10 to 11 a.m. Remarks begin 10:30 a.m.**

**Virtua Voorhees Hospital Campus, Neighborhood D, 200 Bowman Drive, Voorhees, N.J.**

**Tours and interviews with Virtua leaders, patients, and Spanish-speaking staff available.**

**RSVP requested to a contact at top.**



The program will offer **free cancer screenings to underinsured and uninsured people in Camden and Burlington counties** through Virtua’s participation in the New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED) Program, funded by the N.J. Department of Health.

The vehicle will also schedule visits to area employers, places of worship, community centers, and other organizations to provide screenings for those with commercial insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid.

Many people across the nation and South Jersey face barriers to accessing cancer screenings and other vital health services. But when cancer and other conditions are found and treated at earlier stages, people generally have a greater chance of survival and better overall quality of life.

The Mobile Health and Cancer Screening Unit is the latest addition to Virtua’s **growing mobile health fleet**, which includes a [grocery store](#) in a former NJ Transit bus, a year-round [farmers market](#) in a 23-foot van, and a child-friendly [pediatric services](#) vehicle.

“Our newest mobile unit will enable us to further improve access to comprehensive health care for those at greatest risk,” said Stephanie Fendrick, FACHE, MBA, executive vice president and chief strategy officer for Virtua.

#### **Services will include:**

- Leading-edge, 3D mammography
- Clinical breast exams
- Gynecologic/pelvic exams, as part of routine gynecologic care
- Pap tests to detect cervical cancer
- Colorectal screenings via a take-home stool test kit or fast-tracked colonoscopy referrals
- PSA tests, a blood screening for prostate cancer

Those who qualify for NJCEED’s “Wisewoman” program can also receive free screenings for chronic, life-threatening diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. The staff will connect people to free health programs as needed for follow-up care.

Should a cancer screening reveal a need for additional screenings or treatments, the mobile program’s staff can help connect people to the comprehensive Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Cancer Program, which has locations in Burlington, Camden, and Gloucester counties.

#### **Investing in Health**

The new vehicle contains a registration area, private exam room, imaging suite, and restroom. Its \$1 million-plus price tag includes the van’s 3D mammography system, exam room equipment, mobile health care technology, and security system. Donations from Virtua’s philanthropic partners funded

these costs, plus maintenance and operation expenses, ensuring the program can reach all community members in need.

[Aetna Better Health of New Jersey](#) is the lead philanthropic partner for the vehicle, funding more than half of the cost. Other generous donors include the Haines Family Foundation, the physicians of Virtua Health's Medical Staff South, Ott's Restaurants: Berlin, Washington Township, and Medford, and the volunteer-led Virtua Memorial Auxiliary.

"The impact that Virtua Health is having through our mobile community health programs has been fueled by our philanthropic partners. The remarkable capabilities of this new vehicle have inspired many generous donors to join us and be part of a project that will save lives," said Sarah Fawcett-Lee, FAHP, CRFE, senior vice president and chief philanthropy officer at Virtua Health.

To support this initiative or learn more about how Virtua's donors are advancing health care in South Jersey, visit [www.GiveToVirtua.org](http://www.GiveToVirtua.org).

Those who are uninsured can call **856-247-7388** to schedule an appointment. For information about hosting a screening event in your community, call **856-247-7375**.

### **A Patient's Story**

Linda Curlis hadn't had a mammogram in several years. Out of work after her longtime employer closed—sadly, due to the owner's death from breast cancer—Curlis couldn't afford health insurance nor the cost of a mammogram.

The Camden County resident received a free mammogram through Virtua's NJCEED program in 2018. But when the pandemic hit, Curlis was reluctant to schedule the annual screening and risk exposure to COVID-19.

Virtua Community Health Worker Maria Aviles began calling Curlis, gently reminding her to make her next mammogram appointment. Aviles would call every month or so, but Curlis remained hesitant.

"I got to know Maria pretty well," Curlis recalled with a smile. "After a half-dozen calls, she said, 'I'm not going to call you again.'"

Fortunately, Aviles did call again—and this time Curlis made an appointment.

She was shocked when that 2021 mammogram showed a suspicious area in her right breast. A biopsy quickly confirmed she had breast cancer.

"I couldn't believe it. I thought this was a bad dream," said Curlis, who learned that about 85% of breast-cancer patients—like her—have no family history of the disease.

A Virtua breast surgeon performed a lumpectomy to remove the half-inch tumor, and Curlis received three weeks of radiation treatment from the [Penn Medicine | Virtua Health Cancer Program](#) in Voorhees. The cancer had not spread, and therefore she did not require chemotherapy.

"You can barely notice anything was done," offered Curlis, noting that the tumor could not be felt by touch.

“Maria definitely saved my life,” Curlis emphasized, referencing Aviles’s friendly yet persistent phone calls. “She was my angel in disguise.”

The wife and grandmother is also grateful for Virtua’s free cancer screenings through NJCEED, as well as her Virtua doctors and care team. Husband Ernie was her “rock,” and their daughter provided loving support, she added.

“It’s just amazing how everything worked out,” said Curlis, who found new employment as a school bus driver and returned to her job last fall. “I’m back to life now. Everything is good.

“I consider myself luckier than a lot of people,” noted Curlis, now 61. “My boss who passed away, her cancer was stage 4. Mine was caught much sooner.”

She looks forward to returning to Ocean City, N.J., this summer and “walking on the Boardwalk again.” Other plans include spending time at home with her grandchildren, ages 2 and 4; riding bikes, and growing vegetables in her garden.

Curlis’s advice to others: “Get your mammogram done on time. Find a way to do it. It’s not worth waiting!”

#### **About Virtua Health:**

Virtua Health is an academic health system committed to helping the people of South Jersey be well, get well, and stay well by providing the complete spectrum of advanced, accessible, and trusted health care services. Virtua’s 14,000 colleagues provide tertiary care, including renowned cardiology and transplant programs, complemented by a community-based care portfolio. In addition to five hospitals, two satellite emergency departments, 35 ambulatory surgery centers, and more than 350 other locations, Virtua brings health services directly into communities through Hospital at Home, physical therapy and rehabilitation, mobile screenings, and its paramedic program.

Virtua has 2,850 affiliated doctors and other clinicians, and its specialties include orthopedics, advanced surgery, and maternity. Virtua is academically affiliated with Rowan University, leading research, innovation, and immersive education at the Virtua Health College of Medicine & Life Sciences of Rowan University. Virtua is also affiliated with Penn Medicine for cancer and neuroscience, and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia for pediatrics.

As a not-for-profit, Virtua is committed to the well-being of the community and provides innovative outreach programs that address social challenges affecting health, most notably the “Eat Well” food access initiative, which includes the unparalleled Eat Well Mobile Grocery Store. A Magnet-recognized health system ranked by U.S. News and World Report, Virtua has received many [awards](#) for quality, safety, and its outstanding work environment. For more information, visit [Virtua.org](http://Virtua.org). To help Virtua make a difference, visit [GiveToVirtua.org](http://GiveToVirtua.org).

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