

# Mission Spurred by Memory of Wife

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A promise he made to his dying wife has West Pittston resident William Thiel on a mission to save other lives.

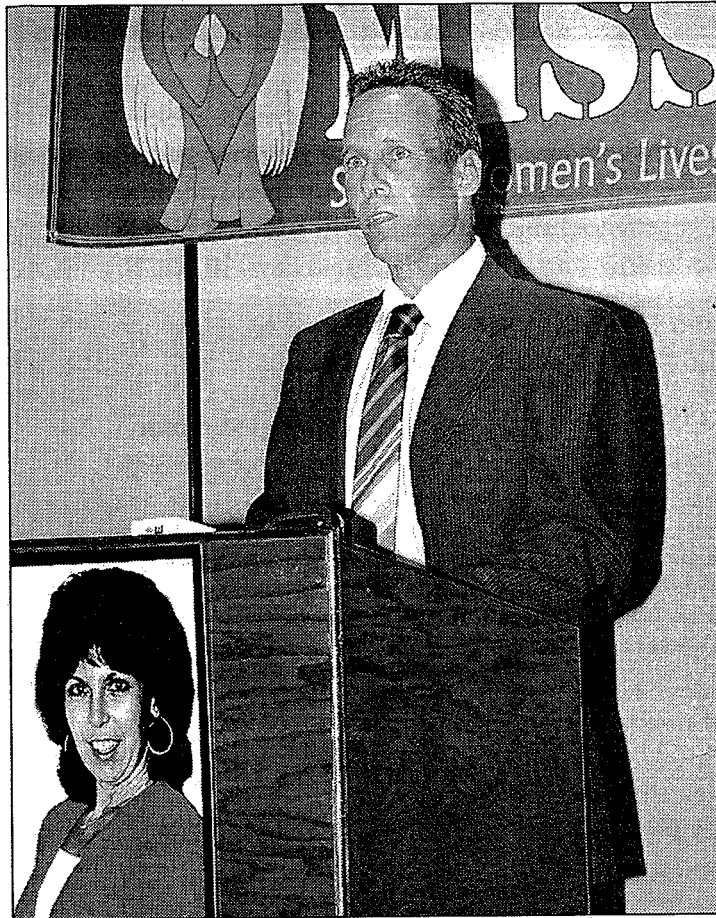
Maureen Thiel was 43 when she died of breast cancer — after three doctors told her not to worry about breast lumps.

On Monday morning, the seventh anniversary of his wife's death, Mr. Thiel launched Maureen's Mission, a nonprofit organization founded to promote the early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer. He finished a press conference and other related work in time to visit his wife's grave at 4:23 p.m. on Monday, the time she died on May 16, 1998.

"If a universal standard of care had existed when my wife, Maureen, found her first lump in 1994, she might be alive today," Mr. Thiel said. "If doctors had followed the accepted standard of care for the diagnosis, treatment and follow-up of a breast lump, I might still have the love of my life and my two sons, Erik and Ryan, might still have a mom."

Three doctors told Mrs. Thiel the lumps in her breast were benign fibroid cysts, Mr. Thiel said. They said she did not have cancer. By the time another doctor told Mrs. Thiel she did have cancer he also told her she had less than two years to live, her husband said.

She didn't want this to happen to others. Her husband



JACK KELLEY / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

**William Thiel speaks about Maureen's Mission, a nonprofit organization founded to promote the early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer, Mr. Thiel's wife, Maureen, died of breast cancer in 1998.**

promised he would work toward that goal.

Maureen's Mission is his plan. It's a program focused on adopting a universal standard of care, which would outline steps doctors should take

when women have breast lumps. Mr. Thiel has been lobbying state and federal officials and the organization is partnering with other breast cancer organizations to publish a pamphlet on standards

of care to place in doctors' offices around the country. The work is funded partially by a jury award in Mrs. Thiel's malpractice case.

In 2004, more than six years after her death, a jury awarded \$5.4 million in damages, the largest malpractice verdict in Monroe County history. The case was heard there because the Thiels, who then lived in Bushkill, Pike County, used Pocono doctors.

Mrs. Thiel filed the lawsuit in 1997 after her doctors told her she had cancer. She didn't sue them for the money, Mr. Thiel said. She sued to hold them accountable for failing her and because the case would save other women's lives, he said.

"Every day in America, women just like Maureen are being sent home and told not to worry," Mr. Thiel said. "With a universal standard of care in place, that won't happen anymore, and more women won't have to die."

Mr. Thiel also created a Web site, [www.maureensmission.org](http://www.maureensmission.org). He hopes to raise enough money to establish a fund to pay for biopsies for women who can't afford them.

Maureen's Mission will hold a "Swing for Life" golf outing Saturday at 8 a.m. at the Four Seasons golf course in Exeter.

"My goal, the thing I want to accomplish most, the thing that would fulfill my promise to Maureen, is to save just one woman's life," Mr. Thiel said.

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5/22/05 - The Sunday Times, Scranton, PA