

# Education mission fulfills vow

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Bill Thiel of West Pittston plans to mark the seventh anniversary of his wife Maureen's death in two ways.

He will be at her gravesite on Monday afternoon, but before then, he will start to fulfill a promise he made to Maureen in the days before she died from breast cancer.

"It has taken me seven years to be able to address the public professionally," Thiel said. "I am focused on fulfilling her promise."

Thiel will hold a news conference at 2 p.m. Monday at the Victoria Inn & Suites on Route 315 in Duryea to unveil "Maureen's Mission," a non-profit organization he created in his wife's memory. The event is open to the public.

"I'm never going to stop fulfilling the promise I made to my wife," Thiel said. "My promise was to tell her story so that it saves another woman's life."

Thiel said his wife found a lump in her breast in 1994.

"If they would have handed us a pamphlet that said: 'This is step one, two, three, four, five in what you can expect in diagnosis, treatment and follow-up,' she might be alive today," Thiel said. "There is no pamphlet and I am going to create that pamphlet. It's educational. It's life-saving."

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Thiel said his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1997 and died in 1998.

"Everyone who hears Maureen's story says, 'Yeah, I know somebody like that,'" he said. "It is unbelievable that society accepts it."

"My wife died because of misdiagnosis of breast cancer and due to the lack of standard of care."

A jury in Monroe County agreed with Thiel's contention that his wife received an improper diagnosis, awarding her estate \$5.4 million on June 11, 2004. Thiel is the executor of his wife's estate.

According to Times Leader archives, the jury ruled that the defendants - Dr. Pamela Villanyi of Shawnee Medical Group, Shawnee on the Delaware, and Dr. Lawrence Klein, formerly of Stroudsburg - failed to perform a biopsy and other tests in a timely manner. At the time, Thiel received the largest malpractice award in Monroe County.

"There is no universal standard for care for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up for breast lumps that is recognized by the medical field," Thiel said.

Through "Maureen's Mission," Thiel hopes to raise money to pay for breast lump biopsies for women who can't afford them. The organization will be holding its inaugural "Swing for Life" golf outing from 8 a.m. until dark May 28 at Four Seasons Golf Course in Exeter. Cost is \$25 and a hole sponsorship is \$100. Thiel would like to build this fund-raiser into a national event.

"The non-profit organization started about eight weeks ago," Thiel said. "It is something I've taken very seriously. It took me all these years to make sure I have all my i's dotted and t's crossed."

"What happened to my wife is unacceptable and Maureen's Mission is setting out to make sure it never happens again."