

Mrs. Bush's Remarks at the Launch of the U.S.-Mexico Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research

Interactive Economics Museum
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11:45 A.M. (Local)

MRS. BUSH: Thank you very much, Ambassador. Good morning. Thank you all for your very warm welcome to Mexico City. I can't imagine a better reason to be here than talking about what our nations are doing together to raise awareness of breast cancer and strengthen medical collaboration to treat this disease.

I'd like to acknowledge my hostess, Ms. Margarita Zavala. Thank you very, very much, Margarita, for your friendship, and thank you for your good work. I'd also, of course, like to acknowledge our Ambassador to Mexico, Ambassador Antonio O. Garza, Jr., and Maria Asuncion, his wife. Tony Garza is a very close personal friend of President Bush's and mine. Thank you very much, Tony.

Hala Modellmog, the CEO of the Susan Komen Foundation, just spoke to you. She does great work around the world now. I was with her in Saudi Arabia and Jordan and the United Arab Emirates in October where we announced the partnership between the Middle East -- the breast cancer partnership between the United States and the Middle East.

Bertha Aguilar, thank you so much, Bertha. Thank you for sharing your own story with us, and then making something really good come out of your own diagnosis of breast cancer with the Cim*ab Foundation.

Also I want to recognize the faculty of the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center who are here, including Dr. Ana Gonzalez-Angulo, who will be the -- chair the Medical Advisory Committee of the U.S.-Mexico Partnership. Would you stand up, please, Dr. Gonzalez-Angulo? There you are. Thank you so much. (Applause.) And of course, Dr. Kendra Woods, who has joined me around the world when we've announced these partnerships about breast cancer.

Twenty-five years ago, women in the United States were too embarrassed and fearful to talk about breast cancer. They didn't know how to protect themselves, and the disease was often diagnosed too late for successful treatment. That all changed when my friend and our Chief of Protocol, Ambassador Nancy Brinker, founded the Susan G. Komen Foundation for the Cure in 1982. This fitting tribute to Nancy's sister Susan, who had died of breast cancer, unites sisters around the world under the pink ribbon that many of us are wearing today.

Two former First Ladies of the United States, Betty Ford and Nancy Reagan, also helped bring this disease public by making their own personal struggles with breast cancer a part of the dialogue of the women of the United States. Thanks to these women's efforts,

today women in the United States step forward to tell their own stories -- and often their own stories of triumph, like my mother, Jenna Welch, who is a survivor of breast cancer. Their courage is helping spread Komen's message: that regular mammograms and breast self-exams lead to early detection, which is the closest thing we have to a cure.

Breast cancer is the most common cause of cancer-related death among women worldwide, and more than a million women are diagnosed each year. In Mexico, one out of every 258 women between the ages of 30 and 40 will discover they have breast cancer in the next ten years. The majority of these cases will be detected in later stages, gravely reducing their chances of survival.

The good news is that this trend can be reversed. And as they have now in the United States, the women of Mexico are breaking their silence to meet the challenge head on. This morning, when I met with Bertha, who co-founded Mexico's Cim*ab Foundation, I found out that as Cim*ab's president, Ms. Aguilar is leading education and media campaigns aimed at increasing early detection rates and saving women's lives. She set an inspiring example of what breast cancer survivors can accomplish by competing in three marathons, including the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington, D.C. We may not all be up to running 26 miles, but we are proud to stand with women around the world, like Bertha Aguilar.

In June 2006, I announced the U.S.-Middle East Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research. And I saw the benefits of this partnership during a tour of the Abdullatif Cancer Screening Center in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Since my trip in October, the Komen organization started a Course for the Cure program. They've trained 78 Saudi women, in four cities, so that they can reach out to their communities. Today, the number of patients seeking breast cancer screenings at the Abdullatif Cancer Center has more than quadrupled, from about six patients a day to now over 25 patients a day.

In the hope of achieving similar results in our region, I helped launch the Partnership for Breast Cancer Awareness and Research of the Americas last July. This effort unites the medical expertise of the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center with the unparalleled resources of the Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the strong commitment of the United States State Department. It brings together experts from the United States, Brazil, Mexico, and Costa Rica. Ambassador Cliff Sobel helped launch the U.S.-Brazil Partnership last November. I'm honored today to be here to formally launch the United States-Mexico Partnership.

The U.S.-Mexico Partnership will unite a team of M.D. Anderson faculty members -- including five who are here in the audience today -- with their counterparts at Mexico's National Institute of Cancer. Together, these specialists will share their knowledge and develop a strategy to reduce the burden of breast cancer in both of our great nations. In addition to the Institute of International Education, they will work on the ground with the Susan G. Komen for the Cure to train Mexican women as breast cancer activists and to build the capacities of local partners. The Cim*ab Foundation will be a part of this work. It will facilitate contacts between international and local stakeholders and work with Komen to incorporate its unique models into local efforts.

Recent training workshops in Monterrey and here in Mexico City show encouraging results. Miriam Ruiz Mendoza, the partnership's program manager, said, "From the first

moment participants break into groups, they are thinking of real cases and they're working with real material."

She cites the example of Maria de Lourdes Ruedas, a breast cancer survivor and volunteer with Cim*ab. Ms. Ruedas believes that even young girls should be aware of breast cancer and accustomed to performing breast self-examinations. She's approached her daughters' middle school about providing this information. The school agreed to offer high school students facts on breast cancer and self-exam, but Ms. Ruedas has not stopped there. She said that the training she received last month changed her attitude in one day from passive to active. She began making calls, and the school will soon be reading her proposal to make breast cancer knowledge available to a younger audience.

The U.S.-Mexico Partnership will draw on the strength of people like Ms. Ruedas, who are unafraid to add their voices to a rising chorus of breast cancer activists. Ms. Ruedas is here with us, I think, isn't she? Is she not here? Oh, there she is. (Applause.) Through the partnership launched today, we'll connect new friends to this global movement. We'll empower women to take charge of their health. And we'll see what the United States and Mexico can discover together that will help both of our countries and the world.

I thank everyone in the audience for being here today and for being a part of this worldwide effort to end breast cancer. Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

END 11:55 A.M. (Local)

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