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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Susan G. Komen® California Launches a Bold New Campaign to Prevent African American Women from Dying Needlessly from Breast Cancer**

*Inland Empire* – Advocates in seven California cities are expanding a year-long effort to keep African-American women from dying needlessly from breast cancer, with a new statewide campaign aimed at overcoming cultural stereotypes and helping African-American women gain access to mammogram screenings, and into and through treatment if necessary.

“African-American die of breast cancer at rates 40 to 70 percent higher than white women in California, even though African-American women are less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer. This is an appalling situation that must change, and we will be stepping up our efforts to do that as we enter the second year of our Circle of Promise California Initiative,” said Rhonda Smith, Project Manager of the Circle of Promise California Initiative.

Formed in 2014 by the seven-city\* Susan G. Komen California Collaborative, the Circle of Promise California Initiative aims to reduce breast cancer deaths in the African American community through outreach and education, communication, and providing access to screening and patient navigation support services.

The Collaborative is expanding its reach as it enters its second year, with the launch of a [bold and compelling media](#), advertising, social media, public relations and branding campaign with the theme of *Speak Up, Talk About It, Make the Promise to Get Screened*, developed by the Carol H. Williams Agency based in Oakland, Ca.

“This campaign will encourage and empower African American women to overcome their fear associated with mammograms, know their risk factors, and to feel safe talking about breast cancer and breast health among themselves, their families, and within their communities”, says Smith.

In conjunction with the campaign, the Komen California Collaborative has engaged three-time Olympic medalist and the World’s Fastest Woman, [Carmelita Jeter](#) and [CBS 2 Los Angeles's Pat Harvey](#) as part of the campaign to encourage women to “make the promise” to get screened via a series of [PSA's](#). Jeter and Harvey also serve as Circle of Promise California Initiative Ambassadors. In this role, they help engage African American women in the fight against breast cancer, increase breast health self-awareness, breast cancer screening behavior, and promote the importance of early detection so that women know why it’s important to be more proactive about their breast health.

The communications campaign is aimed at African American women, age 40 and above who have rarely or never been screened for breast cancer in the past two years.

“As we embark upon the second year of the Initiative, we are on track to achieve our goal of getting 2,000 African American women across the state screened. Since the launch of the Initiative in April 2014, we have reached a total of 11,000 African American women through one-on-one outreach, small group engagement, community events, and education presentations”, says Smith, who is also a 7-year breast cancer survivor. In addition, the Circle of Promise California Initiative efforts thus far have resulting in reaching, supporting, and engaging women in the following way:

- 66,000 women, in general, have received local breast health information
- 1,369 African American women have scheduled a mammogram screening appointment
- 1,154 African American women have completed a mammogram screening

The California Collaborative has also forged strategic partnerships, in support of the Initiative, with many key stakeholders and community-based organizations statewide such as the California Black Women’s Health Project, the California Legislative Black Caucus, the Network of Ethnic Physician Organizations (NEPO), the California Health Collaborative, the California Office of Health Equity, and the WNBA’s Los Angeles Sparks.

The Initiative, funded in part by a grant from the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, aims to reduce breast cancer discrepancies among African American women in California. “Research shows that African-American women have a lower incidence of breast cancer but face higher mortality rates from this insidious disease,” said Pam Kehaly, President of Anthem’s West Region and Specialty Business. “Through this grant, we hope to not only help screen more African American women for breast cancer but to also get them the information they need after an abnormal mammogram test to help narrow this gap.”

For more information, please visit [www.CaliforniaCircleofPromise.org](http://www.CaliforniaCircleofPromise.org)

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#### **About Susan G. Komen:**

Every year, the seven California Affiliates of Susan G. Komen fund vital breast health services for women and men across the state. This year the Affiliates will invest more than \$5.5 million in 110 grants in communities across the State. Seventy-five percent of every dollar raised by Komen in California funds local breast health outreach, education, diagnostic and treatment services for uninsured and underserved women. The remaining 25 percent goes to the Komen Research and Training Grants Program, the largest funder of breast cancer research in the world, after the U.S. government.

#### **About Circle of Promise**

Circle of Promise is a statewide initiative to addresses breast cancer disparities at the system, community, and individual levels, specifically targeting African American women, 40 and above, who are rarely or never screened, low-income, uninsured or recipients of Medi-Cal, in order to provide access to breast health care services and quality health care. The goal of the Initiative is to empower African American women with the knowledge and resources to enter and seamlessly move through a quality, culturally competent and coordinated system of breast health care. The Initiative, launched by the seven California affiliates of Susan G. Komen, is funded in part by a grant from Anthem Blue Cross Foundation, L.L.C.

\* [Susan G. Komen Los Angeles County](#) [Sacramento Valley Affiliate of Susan G. Komen for the Cure](#) [Susan G. Komen San Francisco Bay Area Affiliate](#) [Susan G. Komen Inland Empire](#) [Susan G. Komen San Diego](#) [Susan G. Komen Orange County](#) [Susan G. Komen Central Valley](#)