Black women have the highest rate of death from Breast Cancer in Pierce County.

- **41%**
  - Death Rate
  - Nationally, African American women have a 41% higher death rate from breast cancer than white women.

- **1 in 8**
  - Minority Groups
  - 1 in 8 local deaths were from minority populations such as African American, Hispanic, and American Indian.

- **1 in 3**
  - Ages 40-64
  - More than one-third of local women who die from breast cancer are between ages 40-64.

- **31%**
  - Access to Care
  - 31% of local women ages 40-64 could not afford health care due to poverty or lack of insurance.

- **37%**
  - Late Detection
  - 37% of local African American women were diagnosed after the disease had reached an advanced stage.

[ Have the Discussion ]

- **Quality of Treatment**
  - Lower survival rates have been explained in part by limited access to care, depth of specialty care available, and fear of results.

[ Take Action ]

- **Early Detection**
  - Later stage at diagnosis among African American women has been largely attributed to lower frequency of and longer intervals between mammograms, and lack of timely follow-up of suspicious results.

- **Late Detection**
  - The Breast Cancer Gap: Nationally, the difference in mortality rates between black women and white women with breast cancer has widened since 1975, in part because black women have not benefited as much from screening and treatment. (Source: New York Times, 2013)

Together, we can change this!
How does Breast Cancer affect African Americans?
Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among African American women. Additionally, African American women with breast cancer are more likely to die from it and at a younger age as compared to white women.

What is Leaders in Women’s Health?
Leaders in Women’s Health is an amazing group of 25 volunteers deeply committed to changing the narrative for African American women regarding breast health. The group is working strategically with other organizations to think about training, education and early outreach in the African American and medical communities.

How did this effort begin?
In 2011, the Carol Milgard Breast Center Board of Directors commissioned the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department to assess how the organization could best serve under-insured and at-risk populations in Pierce County. The analysis showed that there is significant variation in the incidence of breast cancer, the use of mammography, and socioeconomic barriers to care throughout Pierce County.

What did the study find?
Specifically the study found the following:

• African American women in Pierce County were more likely than other groups to be diagnosed at later stages of the disease, to die of breast cancer, and to die at a younger age than women in other groups. (Some reasons may include diagnosis at a later stage, more aggressive tumors, or delays in receiving care following diagnosis.)

• Breast cancer death rates and premature death from breast cancer were higher in Tacoma, than any other city within Pierce County, despite relatively high rates of mammography screening.

• Breast cancer incidence, hospitalization and death increased dramatically with age in Pierce County, as elsewhere in the nation.

How has the community been involved?
Based on the results of the study, the Carol Milgard Breast Center and Northwest Leadership Foundation (NLF) began facilitating monthly meetings with community stakeholders. The group convened and facilitated a series of listening sessions which eventually engaged 6 churches, two civic groups and 79 participants. Out of these meetings evolved the Leaders in Women’s Health group to address these health disparities.

What organizations are involved?
The collaborative task force is driven by community organizations involving: Ebony Nurses, Churches, MultiCare Health System, Franciscan Health System, Carol Milgard Breast Center; and facilitated by the NLF consulting team.

What are the goals?
Leaders in Women’s Health is committed to:

• Developing innovative ways to reach this under-served population to access screenings early

• Identify and address the barriers that African American women face as it relates to their health

• Ensure that any work/effort this task force takes on is embedded in the African American community by using churches as its anchor institution

How can I get involved?
We invite you to attend a Leaders in Women’s Health meeting held the 2nd Wednesday of the month (breakfast provided) from 7:30-9:00am at:

Northwest Leadership Foundation
717 Tacoma Ave South, Suite A
Tacoma, WA 98402

How do I learn more?
If you can’t join us for an upcoming meeting, please email us at: womenshealth@northwestleadership.org and we can share updates and information with you.