

Breast cancer doesn't discriminate. The disease doesn't care if you can't miss work for a mammogram or if you lack reliable transportation to see a doctor. Yet these are common hurdles for women in 10 central Illinois counties.

"When you don't live in a rural community, it's hard to imagine driving 30 or more miles to seek specialty care because that's the closest location," said Stacia Goings, diagnostic imaging director at Sarah Bush Lincoln in Mattoon.

Since 2000, the hospital's mobile mammography services have eased this burden. Equipped with 3D tomography equipment, the van travels throughout the region to serve diverse patients, including Amish residents and women who are incarcerated. Studies show 3D mammograms detect breast cancer more accurately and efficiently than traditional 2D screenings—and early detection is key for preventing symptoms and increasing treatment options.

Certified screening technologists visit schools, businesses and factories so women can conveniently receive exams without leaving work or missing wages.

The service, one of few in the region, also helps overcome these common barriers to care:

- Fuel costs;
- Difficulty traversing highways;
- Limited or non-existent public bus systems;
- Unreliable taxi services; and
- Age-related driving impairment.

Insurance status also may prevent women from getting a mammogram. Many patients who receive the screening through the van are uninsured or underinsured and qualify for financial assistance through Sarah Bush Lincoln.

"A screen takes just a few minutes and they are back to their busy schedules," Goings said. "We're happy to provide the care."

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