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February 11, 2016 2:01AM

Maura Flynn of Maynard works to end skin cancer

As president of the Dermatology Nurses' Association, of which she has been a member for 25 years, and an educator and advocacy coordinator for SunAWARE for the Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation, Maynard resident Maura Flynn is focused on preventing skin cancer.

"Most melanomas and other skin cancers can be prevented by using proper sun protection," stated Flynn. "Skin cancer is the most observable cancer as long as you know what to look for. When caught early it is easily treated. But left undetected it can be fatal."

Flynn is a registered nurse and a certified dermatology nurse. She has a degree in public policy and is an active participant in the Health Policy and Advocacy Committee for the DNA.

She recently shared the mission of SunAWARE and her thoughts on banning children from indoor tanning.

What is SunAWARE?

The Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation, a nonprofit educational foundation, was established in 2003 to deliver a free, comprehensive sun safety and melanoma awareness program to children and their caregivers. The SunAWARE Children's Program was developed to focus attention on the need to teach prevention or sun protection. The program is fun and informative.

What is your role?

I have been working at the Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation for one year and I do both education and advocacy for the foundation.

Please describe the SunAWARE Children's Program and curriculum.

The SunAWARE Children's Program is designed to promote our mission to teach children and their caretakers about skin cancer prevention and sun protection. This program is based upon the SunAWARE acronym that includes five easy action steps for primary and secondary prevention. Foundation educators present an interactive, standard-based, cross-curricular program for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. Foundation educators provide SunAWARE classes to children in more than 150 schools in Massachusetts. We also provide professional development for teachers, nurses and administrators.

How does it work?

We work with schools to provide classes at no cost. We have handouts that we encourage children to bring home in order to educate other members of their household. We also participate in health fairs and outdoor events.

What does the ban on indoor tanning for children under 18 mean for the prevention of skin cancer?

Indoor tanning can be up to 10 times more intense than natural sunlight. Data show that indoor tanning use is strongly associated with melanoma risk. This bill also restricts operators of tanning devices to 18 years of age or older. We know from experience that underage operators may "bend the rules" for their friends. This will hopefully prevent the harm caused by turning up the power or extending sessions as requested.

What should parents know?

Parents need to know that melanoma is a deadly disease.



Maura Flynn of Maynard. Courtesy photo

SunAWARE acronym Avoid unprotected exposure to sunlight, seek shade and never indoor tan. Wear sun-protective clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses year-round. Apply recommended amounts of broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sunburn protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 to all exposed skin and reapply every two hours, or as needed. Routinely examine your whole body for changes in your skin and report suspicious changes to a parent or health care provider. Educate your family and community about the need to be SunAWARE. Source: Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation