

Indiana

Alumni Magazine

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2007

AGING BABY BOOMERS:
Looking Down
'ABBIE'
ROAD



ALSO: BECKLEY RETIRES ■ GATES CONFIRMED ■ FIGHTING MELANOMA

A
BOND
BUILT

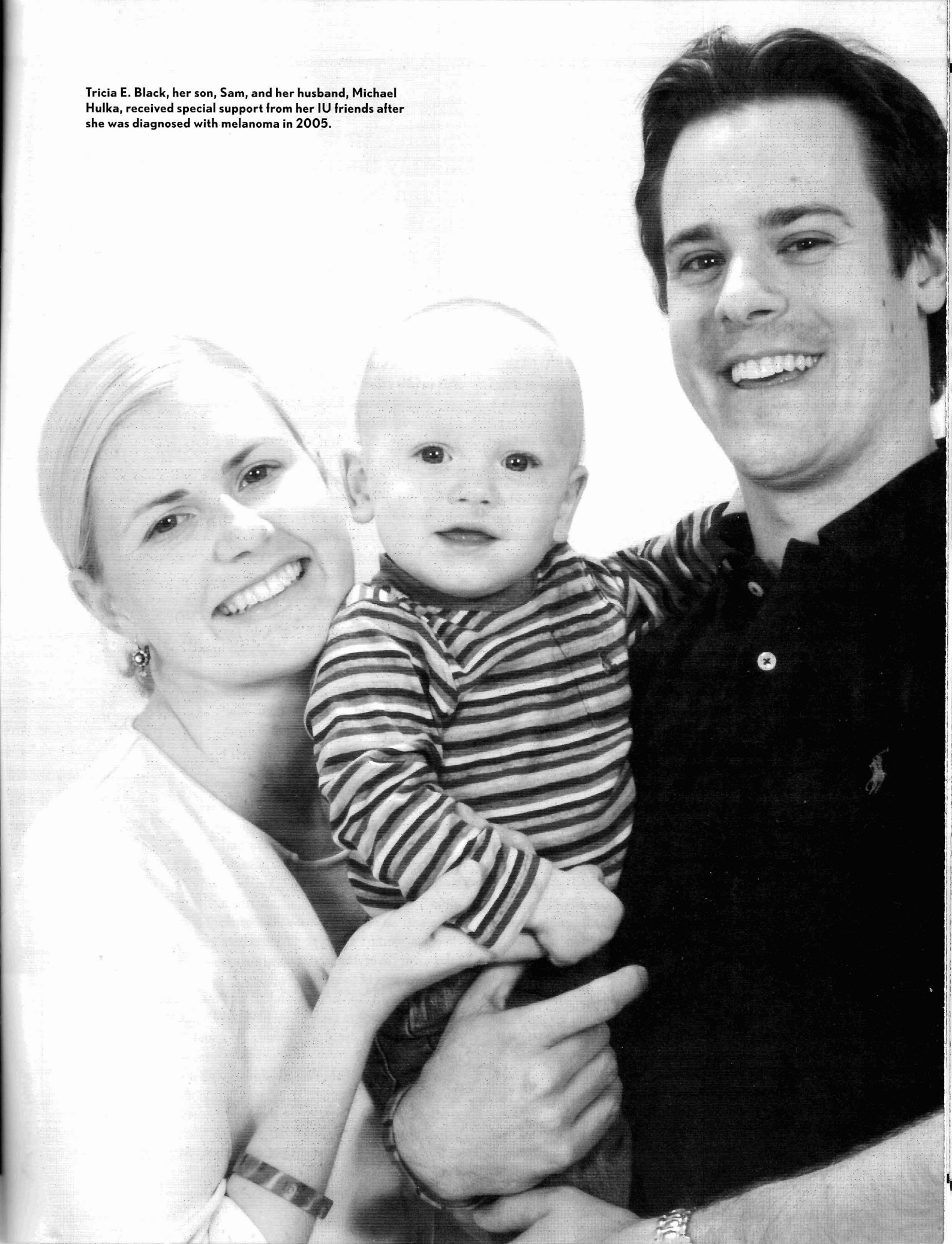
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LAST



BY JAMIE WARD

Tricia E. Black, her son, Sam, and her husband, Michael Hulka, received special support from her IU friends after she was diagnosed with melanoma in 2005.



‘**W**e’re going to look this awful demon in the face and stare it down. We’re going to know that even if at the end of the day it takes my body and my physical presence from the world and people I love, it will never, **EVER** take my spirit. To that end, I am enlisting the troops, my troops, Teb’s Troops.’

— from the blog of IU alumna Tricia Black, BA’98, JD’01 — May 31, 2005.

TRICIA ELAINE BLACK, CALLED TEB BY HER CLOSE friends, wrote these words less than one week after being diagnosed with stage IV metastatic melanoma and given less than a 5 percent chance of survival. During the next 13 months, she stared the “awful demon” in its eyes, detailing the brutal truth about her fight in an online blog (<http://tebspage.blogspot.com>).

Melanoma took Teb’s body on July 11, 2006. With not an empty seat present during her memorial service days later, it was evident the spirit of the 30-year-old Indianapolis attorney lives on in her husband, Michael Hulka, her 2-year-old son, Sam, and the troops who adored her.

As she promised, Teb inspired an army — Teb’s Troops — to fight melanoma. This not-for-profit organization, started by five of Teb’s friends from the IU School of Law—Bloomington, has raised more than \$50,000 to combat the disease, which kills 7,800 people each year. Now with an international network of thousands wearing her Lance Armstrong-type bracelet and remembering the dangers and ways to prevent skin cancer, Teb’s Troops is expanding its focus and beginning to advocate for a voice in the federal government. To Teb’s Troops, it’s unacceptable that no one is telling Congress that melanoma is one of the fastest growing cancers in the United States — without a cure.

“Enjoy your life. Embrace it. Don’t sweat the small stuff,” Teb wrote that day in May 2005. “I woke up one morning, and my life changed forever. But my life is not over. There is always good in the bad. Let’s find that good. And let’s get moving.”

Never losing hope, Teb inspired her army. For many, they would only know Tricia Black through this story. The officers of Teb’s Troops, though, were inspired long before she had cancer. The bond between Teb and these IU friends was forged in Bloomington in 1998, through law school and an apartment complex. It was a bond built to last.

Forming the Troops

AMY HENRY CAMPBELL, JD’01, CALLS THE INITIAL 1998 meeting of three first-year law students at the Poolside Apartment Complex “one of the best accidents ever.” The unofficial dormitory for law students, just steps away from the Law School, Poolside is where Amy met Jennifer Schoen-Gilbert, JD’01, and Teb. Quite quickly, the three discovered they enjoyed wine, exercising, junk food, and civil procedure.

They met Nadine McSpadden, JD’01, the first day of classes. It was in class that Jennifer started telling a story about a bad haircut. Sarah Fischer, BA’98, JD’01, overheard the conversation and could easily relate. She clicked with the others immediately.

“It’s one of those things,” Sarah jokes of the bad hairdo story.

“We all just sort of found each other,” Nadine says.

Because of the demands of law school, the five became like sisters in no time. When Tanya Yarbrough Bowman, BS’96, JD’01, transferred to the School of Law in 1999, she met Teb in the law library. “The Law Ladies,” now six strong, were born.

They worked and played hard and were “into stereotypical girl stuff,” Sarah said. They liked *People* and *US Weekly* magazines, “must-see” TV, and trips to Nick’s, The Upstairs Pub, and Griffy Lake. When studying, they munched on guacamole-flavored Doritos, breadsticks, and desserts. “No fat-free or low-fat was the rule,” Amy says.

They composed legal songs to parody South Park’s “Blame Canada.” Sometimes they would showcase their singing skills during karaoke at Bear’s Place. They talked about life and relationships and shared laughter and tears. Occasionally, they discussed the Constitution.

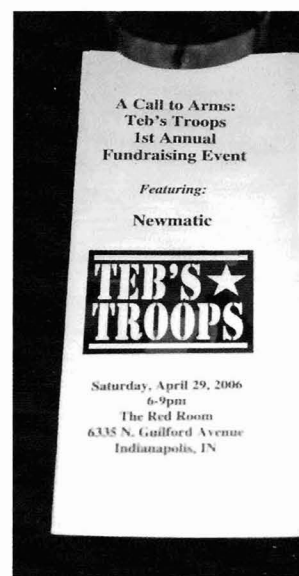
“We were kind of fun and goofy but dorks at heart,” Jennifer says, chuckling.

“Law school is such an intense and stressful experience that you have to bond with people or else you’ll lose your mind,” Nadine says. “We all shared a drive and an ambition, but at the same time we weren’t the type to let school take over everything. It was always easy,” she says of the six’s friendship.

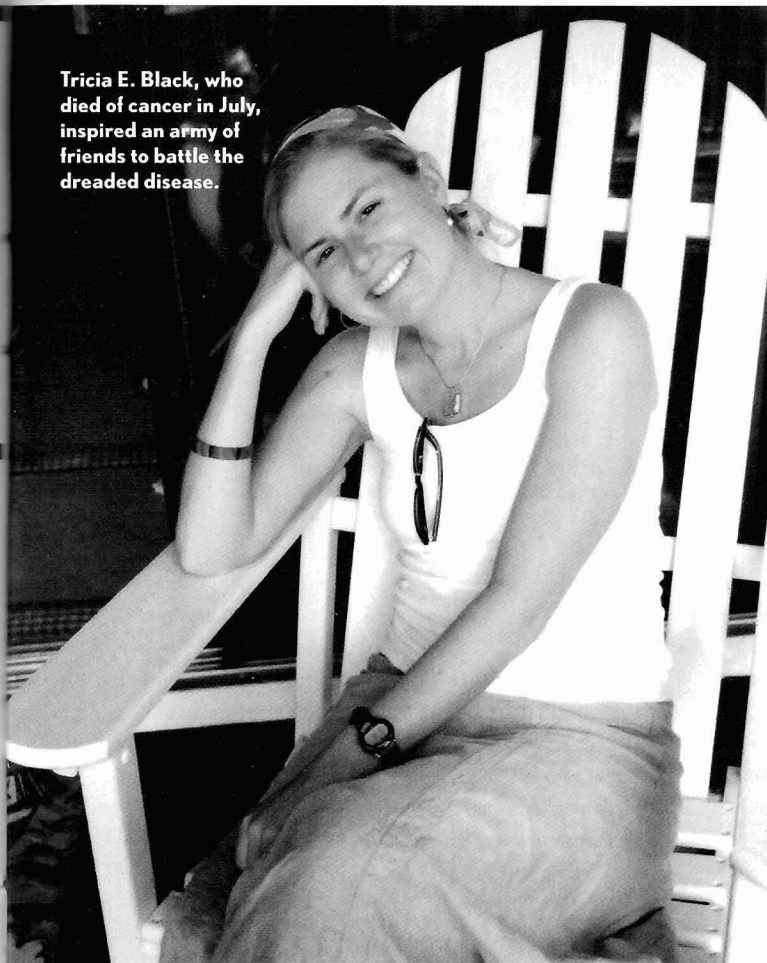
By year two, Teb and Sarah had met their “future husbands” — also law students in their class. Michael Hulka, BA’97, JD’01, and Jon Stern, JD’01, lived at Poolside, too, and Sarah hung around more as a result.

“We had this whole berserk thing going on our second year,” Sarah says. That berserk thing was “Girl’s Night.” Never regimented, Girl’s Night became the Law Ladies’ excuse to get together and forget law school.

“It was really just supporting each other,” Sarah says. “Just sit-



Tricia E. Black, who died of cancer in July, inspired an army of friends to battle the dreaded disease.



ting at Poolside Apartments, sipping some wine, and chitchatting." No matter what the evening entailed, Tanya says what mattered most were the conversations. "We talked about anything and everything," she says.

Jennifer agrees. "Our friendships really grew because we had similar interests, and we were looking for a support group."

By law school's final year, the Law Ladies lured Nadine to Poolside.

"We would just rotate apartments," Amy says. "Tanya lived nearby, and we always got together. I think we all knew what it was to have good friends."

The friendship was so strong that Jennifer knew it was OK to remove Teb's window screen, break into her apartment, and watch TV.

"That was the kind of relationship we had," she says. "She even moved in with me once for a week."

Graduation Contract

WITH GRADUATION LOOMING, AND EVERYONE scattering to begin families and careers, the Law Ladies wanted to ensure they'd never forget their IU experience. They vowed to take an annual trip together — a Girls' Weekend. Attendance was mandatory.

"I love contracts, and Teb was equally as idiotic," Tanya says, laughing. "I don't know how we did it, but we sketched the expressed terms of the contract, and Teb just ran with it. She put it

in final form and made everyone execute it, too."

Teb would even amend the contract at Jennifer's wedding rehearsal dinner.

"Since I was the single one at the time, part of the contract said that on my 30th birthday, they'd throw me a party and bring all their single guy friends," Jennifer says. "We all signed it."

Besides the addendum, the terms of the contract remained the same: mandatory attendance at Girls' Weekend, visiting your fellow Law Ladies within three months of having a baby, and being there for each other in times of emergency.

"We didn't need the contract," Amy says, "but it was symbolic that we were committed to each other. It was about getting together to do the goofball things we did throughout law school."

The first Girls' Weekend took them to Sedona, Ariz., following graduation in 2001. The next trip — Las Vegas. With Teb and Michael expecting the birth of their son, Sam, the third trip returned the Law Ladies to Bloomington. Before the fourth trip came Teb's diagnosis.

"I took it hard," Sarah says. "I remember calling Tricia, and she just started crying. Over this year, though, I became a stronger person. Sometimes you just have to put your strong face on and do what you have to do."

Tricia did what she had to do. She fought, surprising no one. As each of Teb's Troops would say, that's just who she was.

An Army Mobilized

TEN WEEKS AFTER TRICIA'S DIAGNOSIS, TEB'S Troops was operational. Through e-mail and a phone meeting with Jennifer dialing in from Mexico, Teb's fellow Law Ladies incorporated the not-for-profit organization from their respective homes in Chicago, Louisville, Ky., Grand Rapids, Mich., and Indianapolis. And they took their fourth trip together, this time to Sanibel Island, Fla. They laughed, cried, swam, and floated in the ocean and relived their law-school days, eating junk food and drinking wine. Filled with emotion, everyone wondered if this trip would be the last.

"It was one of the best weekends we ever had," Sarah says. They would get one more trip together, in Wisconsin, weeks before Teb's passing. Jennifer had been accompanying Teb to many of her treatments throughout her fight, preparing her friend for battle with each one. Despite being in much pain from the cancer having spread to her bones and bowels, Tricia still wanted to take a boat ride. "And she made it happen," Tanya says. "She was amazing."

When Teb mentioned to Jennifer that she wanted her own camouflaged rubber bracelet, similar to Lance Armstrong's, she needed to say nothing more. Nadine's husband, Roger, built a Web site, and Teb's Troops began selling Teb's camouflage bracelet and apparel. The Web site also served as a link to Teb's blog and other melanoma-related information. As president and legal counsel, Sarah and Jon devoted a room in their home to be a warehouse and packaging center. Everyone else did whatever necessary. Within weeks, Teb's Troops had received donations from as far away as New Zealand and Germany. By March 2006, Sarah had even attended a national melanoma conference in Washington, D.C.

"We wanted this to be her legacy, no matter the outcome," Jennifer says. "We wanted to impact people through her writing."

Teb took care of her part.

"I've had five surgeries, three rounds of IL-2, three rounds of chemotherapy, a bunch of radiation to my pelvis and shoulder area, and a partridge in a pear tree," she wrote in her "Happy Anniversary" to cancer entry on May 26, 2006. "I could not let this occasion slip by without acknowledging it here. I'm still here, I'm still kicking, and I'm feeling pretty good. The only thing I can complain about at present is the fact that I am not allowed to pick up Sam."

At the organization's April 2006 benefit, Teb and her troops made a \$15,000 donation to CancerCare and the Melanoma Research Foundation. They hope to make more donations in the future to support research and families dealing with melanoma. The Law School faculty and staff were one of the evening's most generous benefactors. Everyone present also celebrated what would be Teb's 30th and last birthday. Lauren Robel, JD'83, dean of the IU School of Law-Bloomington, taught civil procedure to Teb's Troops. Robel recalled being unable to travel anywhere in the country during Tricia's cancer without being asked about Teb and her troops. Robel says what Tricia and her classmates accomplished was no surprise either.

"Tricia and Michael inspired that kind of loyalty in their friends through their character and spirit and who they were," Robel says. She choked up thinking about the eternal and sacred bond that developed among her former students, whom she loves dearly.

"What Tricia and the members of her class did really sort of exemplifies the best of what comes out of this school," Robel says. "I particularly wasn't surprised that Tricia Black would take something so awful and turn it into something so inspirational. That's just who she was. She was a miracle."



From left, Sarah Fischer, Nadine McSpadden, Tricia Black, Jennifer Schoen-Gilbert, Tanya Bowman, and Sonia Chen, JD'01, at the Teb's Troops benefit event in April, which raised \$15,000.

Continuing Teb's fight and determined to keep her dream of hope alive, Teb's Troops are now prepared for battle. The group will hold its second benefit April 21 in Indianapolis, and the army is mobilized. It won't stop until a cure is found. And Teb's Troops couldn't have done it without their friend, inspiration, and general. ■

Jamie Ward, BS'97, MA'06, is a friend of Michael Hulka and stood up in Michael and Tricia's wedding. Now a journalist, Ward worked as an IT consultant and Peace Corps volunteer in Belize prior to returning to Bloomington for his graduate degree. He can be reached at jamrward@yahoo.com. The Teb's Troops Web site is www.tebstroops.org.

MELANOMA FACTS

- Currently the fastest growing cancer in the U.S. and worldwide.
- Most common cancer in young adults ages 20-30.
- For women age 25-35, the No. 2 cause of death following breast cancer.
- Occurs in *all* age groups.
- Much about its origins is unknown and there has yet to be a discovery of its specific genetic locus.
- No significant advances in medical therapies (or survival) for patients with advanced melanoma have occurred in the past 30 years.
- Survival among patients whose superficial melanoma is found and diagnosed early is nearly 100 percent.
- Ranks No. 8 on the NCI Research Funding for Cancer list.

PREVENTION METHODS

Kathryn Brown, a health educator for 20 years with the Indiana University Health Center in Bloomington, says to know your body's moles and their ABCD's — Asymmetry, Border, Color, and Diameter. She also advises the following methods, which can aid in the prevention of melanoma:

- Have any body moles you're concerned about checked out by a dermatologist.
- Be sun-safe and use the Slip, Slop, and Slap Method developed by the American Cancer Society. Slip on a shirt, slop on some sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, and slap on a hat to shade your face and ears. You can even wrap on sunglasses to protect your eyes from harmful UV rays.
- Between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., limit your sun exposure. That's when the sun's UV rays are strongest. And don't use tanning beds. "The tanning culture is a huge part of the problem. The untruth about tanning is that it's good for you because it gives you a base tan. It actually gives you no protection. Tanning is damaging to the skin. It's ruining the skin. It's not healthy, and most young people don't think it's something that can affect them," Brown says.

SOURCES ON THE WEB

- www.melanoma.org (The Melanoma Research Foundation)
- www.tebstroops.org (Teb's Troops)
- www.cancer.org (American Cancer Society)
- www.aad.org (American Academy of Dermatology)

Sources: Melanoma Research Foundation, American Cancer Society, and Kathryn Brown, IU Health Center.