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MARYBETH HAMMER

Most musicians crave attention—
but MaryBeth wants to put the spotlight
on **HPV** and **cervical cancer**.

As kids, most of us spent our time trying to sneak out of school. Philadelphia musician MaryBeth Hammer was a little different. She spent her time sneaking into school to play an old grand piano to imaginary audiences in the dark. She smiled, "I always left the lights off, because it felt like the room was full." Today, she plays to a packed house and uses her gift for music to get the word out about human papillomavirus (HPV).

At age 26, MaryBeth was diagnosed with HPV through an abnormal Pap test. MaryBeth's doctor explained that HPV is a common virus that is easily spread—and it can lead to cervical cancer. She thought to herself, "Oh my God, I may have cancer." Luckily, her infection was in the early precancerous stages, and after a surgical procedure the cells were removed. She sighed, "It's really emotionally draining. You feel all vulnerable."

Two years later, MaryBeth turned the spotlight on HPV and founded the not-for-profit *Concerts for A Cure*. Every year, she brings together musicians and volunteers to help raise money and create awareness. "HPV is a huge thing that needs some light shed on it," she pointed out. It's estimated 80% of women will have had HPV in their lifetime. But, like many, MaryBeth didn't know she was at risk. Her doctor gave her the facts. "You can get it from [genital] contact—it doesn't necessarily have to be intercourse."

HPV often has no signs or symptoms, which means many people don't even know they have the virus. MaryBeth has been in a long-term relationship, but conceded, "I probably had it for years and didn't even know it." For most women, HPV infections clear up on their own, but for some—like MaryBeth—they don't. Annual screenings were a lifesaver, and she's thankful she was vigilant about her checkups. She added, "I was fortunate—my case of HPV was diagnosed early."

Concerts for A Cure has given MaryBeth a mission. "I've always felt that I've wanted to do something that was bigger than me," she confided. "What better way than to use my talents and help other people." Someday she hopes to take it to a national stage. Until then, she stresses, "Each woman should talk to her own doctor about what is right for her."

 **Talk to your doctor today
or get the facts at HPV.com.**