



Humboldt Community Breast Health Project

Supporting women facing breast or gynecologic cancer

Fall 2010
Vol. 11 Issue 2

Our Client Services Director and our Founder reflect on what healing means to them. We invite you to share your thoughts about what healing means to you. Please drop us a note or email info@hcbhp.org.

Healing is . . . Like Embroidering a Flower Over a Mended Seam

By Mary Meengs

Since I began working at the Project, I have been reminded of how important it is to the healing process for us to tell our stories. Each time we remember and relate the details of our diagnosis, treatment, and recovery, we are reinforcing our ability to survive. We are reminding ourselves of our innate strength and resilience.

This message goes to a cellular level, and I believe it helps our immune system. It also goes to our emotional and spiritual centers and increases our confidence that we will be able to handle future adversities. Like mending a torn garment, the more times you go back over the defect with your needle and thread, the stronger it gets.

We can tell our stories in the form of writing, or to new people we meet, or repeatedly to family and friends. One of the most powerful places to go over the story again is at a support group, where you are sure to have interested and supportive listeners and where your story is likely to inspire or reassure someone else. This group process often leads to insights and interpretations that enrich our fabric and make it very special – like embroidering a flower over a mended seam! 🌸

Healing is . . . The Heart of the Project

By Julie Ohnemus, MD

Healing is one of the core reasons the Project was founded. It is integral to our mission and services that are built around patient advocacy and the wounded-healer model. As such I believe the Project needs to continually ask: what does it look like to create a healing community?

Healing is essential to our health and wellbeing. It is the answer to the human condition of suffering. This was recognized early in medicine. In the Hippocratic Oath treatment of disease is viewed as a dual process – both delivering the best evidence-based medical care and, equally, creating an awareness of the patient’s own innate healing abilities. The latter became overshadowed by our technological revolution, though it appears balance is returning. I recently attended a conference on “Cancer as a Chronic Disease,” which was attended by over 750 health professionals from 24 countries. The central message was that cancer is a “wound in need of healing.”

I discovered in my own journey that cancer can be a rite of passage involving isolation, separation, uncertainty, and



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Welcome New Staff!



L to R: Mary Meengs, Client Services Director, Mary Flowers, Volunteer Coordinator, and Jenny Koeune, Outreach Coordinator. We asked them to tell us why they chose to work at the Breast Health Project.

Mary Meengs

I’ve always worked as a family practitioner, seeing patients and sometimes teaching, so at first I thought it might seem odd for me to become the Client Services Director at HCBHP. But the more I learned about the job, the more I came to realize that my work here allows me to do the things I liked best and did well as a doctor— listening, explaining, helping clients navigate the complex world of specialists and resources, and just being a source of support and encouragement. However, hectic schedules and time pressures made it difficult for me to do these things that I consider essential and even sacred. At the Project, these are the most important and valued aspects of my job.

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potential for transformation. When diagnosed with cancer, you become suddenly deprived of the normal denial of death. You enter treatment seeking cure and discover the underbelly of consciousness is forever exposed, because even when your world resumes its “normal” shape you can’t forget that uncertainty cancer has imprinted. The power we, and our culture, find in certainty or control has been profoundly violated. Even if cured, there is an underlying fear, and thus a need for healing or adaptation to uncertainty in order to find wholeness.

Cure is finite, while healing is infinite. In only seeking cure life is chosen out of fear, but when you also seek healing life is chosen for wellbeing. Cancer, as a threat, instinctually initiates the fight for cure, but it also awakens the opportunity for infinite wisdom as lived awareness and a re-enchantment with life. Healing is a choice and this is where you find empowerment and meaning in your cancer experience. In this process hope is vital as the sustenance for the human spirit, and this is what the Project offers as the women here actively listen and bear witness.

Conditions of healing are as unique as a person’s fingerprint, but there are common characteristics. The work of healing requires creativity, imagination, a sense of humor, intuition, and reframing of your suffering and attitude. There is a reinvigorating of wonder and of the senses. The process involves a reflection on your beliefs and feelings around cancer, which unearths the meaning you have applied to your own diagnosis. Thus healing is a revitalizing of your energy, senses and brain, which literally reinvents your body.

Science has uncovered the human genome and we now know that we affect our DNA’s expression by our choices and attitude. There is a memory or imprint of disease at the cellular level of our body, not just in our brain. For genuine healing to occur this memory needs to change. This requires awareness and time. There needs to be a reprogramming of a person’s instinctual thinking and somatic response to uncertainty, such as the worry or fear that surfaces with follow-up exams.

This requires an embracing of self-care, trust, loyalty and compassion. Healing emphasizes the importance of one’s relationship to self and others. It requires trust in one’s body and embodiment of trust in oneself. The wounded-healer is an archetype representing such a process where cancer as the wound is the initiator to a path of healing. The process contained in the two words “wounded-healer” is not linear; rather it is reflective. As William Wordsworth wrote: “We will grieve not, rather find strength in what remains behind.” In healing the wound serves as a recurring springboard for growth and understanding. It continues to inform the unfolding of one’s life with the transformative lessons gained, and provides the empowerment found with embracing uncertainty. This inspires us to follow Ralph Waldo Emerson’s advice: “Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” 🐾



From the Executive Director

The Breast Health Project, like most organizations in the current times, has not been immune to change. As we faced budget cuts and employee transitions, the volunteers and staff held on through the tide of change. We feel optimistic about the future, although we are leaner in staffing. We remain committed to our core services: helping women and their loved ones, as they face breast or gynecologic cancer.

Volunteers are the engine that powers HCBHP. Last year we saw 201 new clients and assisted over 450 clients. We also did one-to-one outreach to over 3500 individuals in the community. Staff helped coordinate the efforts, but volunteers made sure that women did not fall through the cracks of our medical system. This commitment and high standard of care is what makes HCBHP a safe haven for each woman as she travels her individual cancer journey.

Clients, *survivors*, you are the magic underlying the strength of the Humboldt Community Breast Health Project: listening with compassion, helping women who are newly diagnosed come to terms with the next steps on their cancer journey, helping save lives by encouraging early detection, healing by telling your own stories. We welcome and thank the survivors who continue to expand the support we can offer.

Thank you to our community for the many ways you support HCBHP. Please enjoy the newsletter and support the outreach and fundraising endeavors underway this Fall. HCBHP is *your* community resource when you or a loved one needs it.

With gratitude,
Rose Gale-Zoellick
rosegz@hcbhp.org

For the many ways you support our programs and our clients, we are forever grateful to

Volunteers • Community Members • Local Businesses • Medical Providers

Foundations & Major Corporate Support: Arcata Sunrise Rotary, Baroni Designs, Cher-Ae Heights Casino, Coast Central Credit Union, Eureka High students, Green Diamond Resource Co., Humboldt Area Foundation, Humboldt Redwood Co., Jill Irvine Foundation, Levin Foundation, Mel and Grace McLean Foundation, Rotary of Eureka, Safeway Foundation, Southwest Rotary, St. Joseph Health System, Union Labor Health Foundation, Wildberries Marketplace.

To join our family of supporters or volunteers please call 825-8345 or visit our website www.hcbhp.org



Clarissa of Kalos Salon with warmliner Linda and friends. Kalos Salon styles the wigs clients choose from our Breast Nest closet for prostheses and wigs.

Gynecologic Cancer Survivors Are Passionate Educators



We are more than pink.

In September, Eddie Hannah, Irene Blackburn, and Carolyn Lehman joined Client Services Director Mary Meengs to educate our community about the importance of gynecologic cancer early detection. Radio and television interviews, radio spots and press releases discussed the myth of the “silent” symptoms and emphasized the importance of advocating for oneself when suspicious symptoms persist.

Mad River Community Hospital Supports HCBHP Patient Navigation

A grant from the National Breast Cancer Foundation to Mad River Community Hospital to increase breast cancer screening will also support patient navigation services offered by HCBHP. A limited number of mammograms will be available each month at MRCH for income-eligible women. Call us or MRCH.



“Bingo With a Twist” with the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence supported HCBHP in grand style this summer.

While our health care system can certainly boast of wonders of technology and talent, we all know there frequently are huge gaps. Too many people don’t have access to all or any of these services, as I experienced during my seven years at Mobile Medical. Even those with good insurance often leave their doctor’s office without understanding their test results, their prognosis, their treatments or their choices. Health professionals often don’t have the kind of time patients really need. Also, I doubt they have a closet full of breast prostheses and wigs! So, I see the Project as a part of the solution to our health care crisis, a little light in the darkness.

I’m so happy to be here! And, as a breast cancer survivor myself, I am able to relate to our clients and feel grateful to spend my days in such a nurturing and respectful atmosphere.

Mary Flowers

In early 2010 after teaching for 25 years, I began to search for part-time work where I could serve in a deeply heartfelt way. When I saw the job announcement for the Breast Health Project’s 12 hour per week Volunteer Coordinator, I knew that I had found it.

The opportunity to work in an organization rich with the wisdom of cancer survivors and supporters meets my desires. I love working in the intimacy of the Project office with women who care so deeply about each client who calls or walks in the door, and who also care about each other. I have already learned and received so much from the fabulous team of wonderful women, wounded healers, laughers, leaders, and loving people who populate this old house on the corner near the Co-op. Each day I walk in the door, I am touched by some aspect of this healing environment.

Jenny Koeune

One day when I was about to graduate from Amherst and wanted to take a year to work before entering a Physician Assistant program, I was browsing the AmeriCorps website and saw the position at the Breast Health Project. I searched it and knew within seconds this was the place for me.

I’m here for the same reason everyone else is. I believe in something that is bigger and more important than just me. Cancer has played a role in all of our lives in one way or another, whether it was a grandmother, a mother, a sister, a friend – you have been affected. I believe the Breast Health Project creates miracles, and I wanted to be part of that miracle that exists here.

Staff

Executive Director

Rose Gale-Zoellick, MSW, MPH

Client Services Team

Mary Meungs, MD

Rebecca Zettler, NP

Pat Cowan, RN, Volunteer

Sue Mossman, Volunteer

Warmline: Sheryl, Jean, Chris,

Jane, Vicky, Joy, Linda, Sandy,

Bonnie, Rinda, Mie, Volunteers

Office Manager

Barbara Sage

Volunteer Coordinator

Mary Flowers

Outreach Coordinator

Jenny Koeune, VISTA

Board of Directors

Julie Ohnemus, MD

(Medical Consultant/Founder/

Past President)

Physician, Corporate Medical

Director Open Door

Community Health Center

Breast Cancer Survivor

Lucinda Bradshaw, PT (Sec.)

Physical Therapist

Bojan Ingle (Past Pres.)

Breast Cancer Survivor, Retired

Allan Katz, Retired

Eva Laevastu (President)

Retired USAF Reserve

Carolyn Lane (VP)

Mgr, Medical Staff Services

& Physician Recruiting,

Redwood Memorial Hospital

Elizabeth Lara-O'Rourke

Health Promotion

& Education Mgr, UIHS

Linda Larkin, RN

Mad River Home Health

Carolyn Lehman, MA(Past Pres.)

Writer, HSU Lecturer

Gynecologic Cancer Survivor

Sheri Quigley, RN

Nurse Clinic Coordinator,

North Country Clinic

Jay Rezzonico

Retired Hospice Exec Dir

Breast Cancer Survivor

Gretchen Stadler

HICAP Counselor, A1AA

Jean Wichelman (Treas.)

Retired Clinical Pharmacist

Breast Cancer Survivor

Calendar

September is National Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month

Listen to Katie Whiteside's interviews with HCBHP on the KHSU Home Page

Sept 7 & 21 • 1:00 p.m.

Listen in October for Breast Cancer topics.

September 25 • 7:00 p.m.

10th annual Fall Concert

The Arkley Center for the Performing Arts

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

• Free Mammogram Drawings

• Sales for Survivors

November 4 • 5:00-6:00 p.m.

Face to Face at HCBHP

Hosted by Gita Meshri, DO

Eureka OB-GYN Associates

January is National Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

PAP tests save lives!

Support Groups

• Breast Cancer Support Groups

1st & 3rd Thursdays • 6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Arcata, HCBHP office

2nd & 4th Wednesdays • 6:00-7:30

Fortuna, 2280 Newburg Road

• Gynecologic Cancer Support Group

2nd & 4th Tuesdays • 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

• Advanced Group

Living with Stage 4 disease

1st & 3rd Mondays • 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

• Amazon Writers

Healing through writing - a peer led group

2nd & 4th Wednesdays • 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

"SALES FOR SURVIVORS"

Businesses support HCBHP

See insert for October Calendar

Raffle Winners 2010

Mitzi Reid of Salyer, Judy Sheldon of Alta, Jerrilynn Alvara of McKinleyville, and Glenn Hurlburt of Arcata.

Graystone Jewelers was our generous and gracious host for the Raffle Drawing at Arts Alive! providing food, champagne, decorations and goodie-bags.

Thank you to all who sold or bought tickets. We'll do it again next year – fabulous destinations are already being rounded up!

Humboldt Community Breast Health Project

Mon-Fri 9:00 am-2:00 pm

After hours by appointment

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Email: info@hcbhp.org

Web: www.hcbhp.org

We offer support, information and hope to help women become their own medical advocates and find their own path to healing. HCBHP does not advocate or endorse any specific course of treatment, whether medical, alternative or complementary.

Help us go green and save money!

Subscribe to our Spring & Fall Newsletter.

Email newsletter@hcbhp.org

Newsletters archived at www.hcbhp.org.

Keep up with current happenings!

Subscribe to our monthly e-Volunteer News.

Email volunteer@hcbhp.org with

e-Volunteer News in the subject line.