

A Journey Through Fear

By Mary Meengs, MD, BGHP Medical Consultant

Imagine you are driving down the road, a familiar route on an ordinary day. Unexpectedly, you see a sign that says “Detour Ahead.” Hmm. You weren’t expecting this. Is it for real, and will it apply to you? A little further on, with a mild sense of trepidation, you realize that yes, you have no choice but to leave the well-known route and follow the signs on the detour. You’ve never been off the highway in this area, and you can’t tell how long the detour will take and where you’ll have to go. Do you have enough gas? What about that twisty section of road you’ve heard about — will you have to go there? Through the dangerous neighborhood? That cliff-side road that you’ve heard others describe and complain about? Will you have phone reception if you break down? And, it’s getting dark on top of everything else. Now you’re really nervous, heading toward panic.

If you’ve ever been diagnosed with cancer, this story might remind you of the early feelings of shock, anxiety, loneliness, being overwhelmed. And mostly, fear of the unknown. These are nearly universal reactions. They are usually most intense at the beginning of the “detour,” and lessen as the journey progresses and the unknowns become clearer. The adrenaline subsides and you get used to your new normal. But when you’re at the beginning, you have to take it on faith that you will make it back to your familiar road, ok for the most part.

So, how do you cope with all that fear? How do you support a loved one who’s in the grips of it? A few strategies might help.

MORE ROAD SIGNS, aka information. This helps almost everyone deal with the scary unknowns. What treatment will you need? Will you still be able to work, care for your family? Will your insurance cover everything, will your kids be able to handle it, how will

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Breast and GYN Health Project
A Cancer Resource Center
(Formerly Humboldt Community Breast Health Project)

Proceeds support the Breast and GYN Health Project, which offers services to those with breast or gynecologic cancer concerns. All proceeds stay local.

Tickets available at BGHP:

(707) 825-8345

Tickets \$10 each 3/\$25 7/\$50 15/\$100
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Drawing June 8, 2018 • 8 p.m. • Arcata Exchange
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More info at www.BGHP.ORG



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Six Rivers Running Club's 37th Atlanta's Victory Run & Walk Mother's Day

Sunday, May 13th 10 a.m.

This is an ALL women event!

2 mile run/walk or 8K run/walk

Starts & ends at the Arcata Co-op.

Fees: \$20 for age 13 and older; \$10 for age 12 and under

Proceeds benefit BGHP & local running teams

you cope if you need chemo and lose your hair? So very many questions, and different people like different amounts and kinds of information, just like some people like maps and others just want to know when and where to make the next turn. The internet can help, but beware of blogs and stop searching if you're getting more anxious—you may be off on an inappropriate tangent. Keep lists of questions for upcoming doctor appointments, and don't be afraid to call the nurses that work in your doctors' offices—they are often a wealth of knowledge.

SOMEONE TO TALK TO. The detour scenario isn't quite as nerve-wracking with a passenger you like for company. They can help with navigation, share their own experiences and knowledge, or talk you down from an unreasonable fear. Or just acknowledge and sympathize with the scariness of the situation. Isolation is a common facet of the cancer experience. Some people have an extensive support system and an ease with sharing, but many do not. An offer to accompany someone to a doctor's appointment or a chemo treatment or scan can be hugely helpful and comforting. Keeping in touch with a friend going through treatment, even if you think you don't know what to say, is much better than abandoning them. And if you're the patient, don't be shy about asking for help or company—people want to help!

DISTRACTION. Turn on the radio. You don't have to put 100% of your focus on your journey to be able to navigate safely. Well, maybe you do if you're driving, but if you're going through cancer, give yourself a break. Make plans for social activities, hobbies, couch time with your favorite pet and a funny movie. On the days that you feel decent physically, keep your life as close to normal as you can. You don't have to, and shouldn't be the 24/7 Cancer News Network anchor. This might be easier said than done, but you can ask friends and family to help, and keep trying to fight your mind's inclination to focus on fear.

BE HERE, NOW, aka mindfulness. A practice that helps you learn to focus on the present moment can really help to lessen the fear of the unknowns in our future. Truly, none of us knows with certainty what will happen in the next hour, let alone in coming weeks and months. It would be easy to let fear take over and keep us from enjoying anything. But if you can regularly sit in a quiet and relaxed place, focus on your breathing, and recognize that right now, at this moment, you feel ok, all the essential parts of your body are working adequately, your immediate surroundings are safe and secure, and you feel grateful about these things, you are practicing mindfulness. I feel so much better just writing that sentence! Becoming more mindful can make you feel more loving, patient and calm. And that's good for your body as it deals with cancer and cancer treatment.

CONTACT THE BGHP! We have support groups, free monthly mindfulness classes, a library, consultations, and a team of volunteers and staff who are eager to hear your story, help you find what you need, and keep you company on the "detour." Many of us have been through similar experiences and come out the other side. If we can help you or a friend, give us a call.

From the Executive Director

Did you know BGHP does not receive funds from American Cancer Society (ACS) or Relay for Life? Nor do we receive donations from the Discovery Shop.

This is not a bad thing - we all benefit from the important research, political advocacy and quality educational materials ACS provides. But, if you thought that money ACS raises each year is shared with BGHP, it's just not so.

People sometimes think that BGHP gets funding from St. Joseph Hospital's cancer program and from our county/state government. Unfortunately, this also is not the case. BGHP has been awarded an occasional grant from the St. Joseph Hospital Community Benefits program. We are very grateful for those grant funds and use them carefully to help our clients.

It is YOU, the caring, generous individuals in our community who provide 80% of all BGHP's funding. Only 20% of our funding this year comes from grants.

Our board of directors, staff and volunteers are careful stewards of your donations; you trust us to use them responsibly and we value that trust. You have made it possible for us to provide cancer support in our community for over 20 years. Together we maintain a safe place for people in our community facing cancer to get information, support and hope.

Your gifts make a difference!

My sincere gratitude,
Rose Gale-Zoellick

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The Power of Bearing Witness

by Brenda Elvine-Kreis, MA, Co-Director of Client Services

When I first started working at the Breast and GYN Health Project in 2010, I was barely 1-year out from my own breast cancer diagnosis. At that time, I remember hearing something (from our Mission Statement) about “bearing witness to others.” Although I hate to admit it, I really had no idea what that was supposed to mean! I have heard this referenced numerous times at BGHP since then, but have never felt particularly clear about what exactly is meant by it. Recently, I had one of those “light-bulb-moments” about what it means when we bear witness to another person.

I was talking to an old friend whom I had not been in touch with for some time. I had called her because of a Facebook post she had made that gave me the impression that she was going through a difficult time. Upon picking up the phone, she immediately blurted out that she and her partner of twenty-some years were getting divorced. I was speechless, feeling as though someone had just punched me in the stomach. While I was expecting some sort of bad news, this scenario couldn’t have been further from my mind! I was heartbroken for her. But it was what she said to me next that struck me the most. “It is so awful telling our old friends who have known us as a couple for so long,” she said. “I feel terrible telling you.” This statement simply shattered my heart.

I was shocked that she would think of other people’s feelings and reactions at a time when her own must have been so unbearably overwhelming. “Oh! Please do not think about *me!*” I rushed in to soothe, “I am here for *you.*” In retrospect, what I meant was, “as someone who cares about you, let *me* support *you*—let me *bear witness to you, your pain, your truth.*”

Although I have supported women experiencing a cancer diagnosis in my role at BGHP for the last seven-and-a-half years, for the first time, I understood completely and fully what it means when we say that we “bear witness to others.”

While sharing bad news with people who care about us may be difficult, it serves a purpose above and beyond just informing them about something that has happened. To me, when we bear witness to someone else’s story, we have the privilege and opportunity to take a little piece of the painful burden that person is carrying and hold it for them. In my friend’s case, I think of her devastating circumstances as a boulder that she is struggling to carry. Each time she tells her story to someone who loves her it is as though she is giving them a little pebble chipped off that boulder to carry for her. Similarly, as cancer survivors, the more we tell our story the more we are able to decrease the power it has over us and lessen its painful sting.

So as it turns out, I finally understand what is meant by this *bearing witness* thing. It is what we do here at the Breast and GYN Health Project, whether it is in the form of a support group or one-on-one conversations. We listen. We see you and your truth. We do not judge. We chip away at your boulder piece-by-piece, bearing witness all along the way.

And while it cannot offer a cure to cancer, it can heal our wounds. It is a powerful thing.



RESOURCES FOR MAMMOGRAMS, PAP TESTS & OTHER WOMEN’S HEALTH EXAMS

Women without insurance or with high patient costs and who may meet income guidelines can call BGHP to learn more about the following programs:

CDP- Every Woman Counts:

All local hospitals and many doctors’ offices/clinics participate.

Family PACT: Many doctors’ offices/clinics participate.

Mad River Community Hospital’s Free Mammography grant from the National Breast Cancer Foundation.



HUMBOLDT AREA FOUNDATIO

**YOUR LEGACY GIFT WILL
PROVIDE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE**
BGHP has a fund at Humboldt Area Foundation which makes it easy to leave a legacy gift. Your investment in healing, compassionate support and hope will make a difference for cancer patients in the future. If you have already included BGHP in your estate plans, insurance policies, retirement plans or other planned giving, we thank you! *To learn more, contact:*
Rose Gale-Zoellick at 707-825-8345 or Humboldt Area Foundation, 442-2993

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Thank you Safeway/Albertson’s Foundation for the grant for outreach and client services.
Thank you Safeway customers for register contributions in May.

IMPACT REPORT of 2017 SERVICES

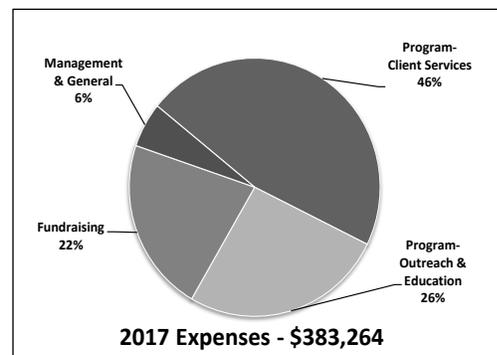
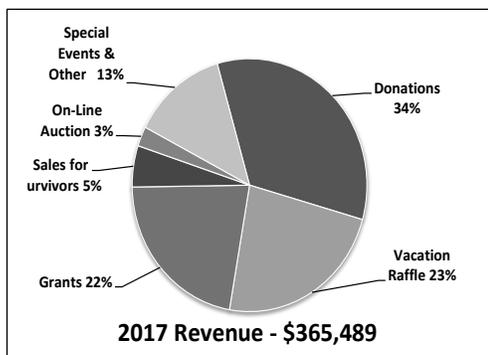
All these services were free of charge thanks to our donors



BGHP's Services to Individuals, Families, and the Community

- Assistance to 423 people facing breast or gynecologic cancer concerns in 2017 and 6,519 contacts with these individuals
- Outreach to 17,147 community members with information about breast and gyn cancer
- Reliable information: about financial resources, medical journal articles, pathology reports, plus a lending library and individualized information searches
- Peer support in six different support groups
- One-to-one compassionate support from our warmline volunteers and staff
- Assistance preparing for important medical visits
- Services are FREE of charge, and grassroots contributors keep our operations running

- ❖ 14 active members on working Board of Directors
- ❖ 8 staff, most part-time (about 5 FTE)
- ❖ About 200 volunteers contributed over 4000 hours



- Clients received 362 patient navigation services to help them access not only medical services, but financial and social services resources too.
- 64 people with cancer concerns received decision support/medical visit consultations with BGHP's Medical Consultant to help them become better educated about their diagnosis and treatment options.
- Over 100 special medical record binders were given to people newly diagnosed with cancer
- 149 support group sessions were held for six different groups. There were 613 support group attendees over the course of the year.
- More than 60 women sought help to obtain a free wig, breast prosthesis, bra, scarf, etc.
- About 50 people with breast or gynecologic cancer received a unique ChemoKit bag with useful items to help them as they underwent chemotherapy.



Thanks to Our Volunteers & Supporters



Health Fair Tabling



Felicia Oldfather & Sue Mossman receive awards for volunteerism



Zumbathons & Volunteers



Client Services Volunteers



Volunteer Board Members



We are Forever Grateful to Our Contributors

Thank you to over 880 individuals and businesses who generously donated from August through March. Space allows a partial listing of foundation, business & event supporters.

20th BGHP Anniversary supporters-individuals, foundations & businesses
 Alibi Bar and Restaurant for your special events
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 Arcata High School Girl's Volleyball Teams
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 California Cancer Crushers
 City of Eureka for Eureka Municipal Center Zumbathon Teachers, Participants, Sponsors & Raffle Item Donors
 Coast Central Credit Union for 20th Anniversary and Vacation Raffle Sponsorship
 Dutch Brother's Breast Cancer Awareness 100% of sales day
 Eureka High School Cheer and Football Teams for Punt, Pass & Pink
 Eureka Natural Food for selecting BGHP for the Change for Change tabling and donation opportunity
 Facebook event participants... you are amazing... thanks for introducing BGHP to your friends!
 Humboldt Cider Company Pints for Non-Profits Night
 Humboldt County Court Staff for your teamwork & contributions
 Humboldt Deputy Sheriff's Organization employee contributions & match
 Humboldt Herbals for "I Love Me" Teas in ChemoKits
 Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Social Action Committee
 J-Bird's Treasure Nook's special fundraiser
 Jerry Peterson Memorial Fund
 KHSU for your media sponsorship
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 Linden & Co Salon and Spa 9th Annual Special October Event
 Lost Coast Brewery Tap Room for the Pints for Non-Profits Night
 Mad River Radio Group for Punt, Pass & Pink Organization
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 McKinleyville High School Girls' Volley Ball Teams and their supporters
 Miabo Foundation Fund
 Muddy Waters Coffee Company for the special fundraiser
 North Coast Journal for your media sponsorship
 Patricia D. and William B. Smullin Foundation
 Redwood Curtain Brewery Pints for Non-Profits
 Safeway Foundation
 Sales for Survivors participating businesses
 ShopSmart & Ray's Food Place for register donations
 Soroptimist International of Eureka
 Soroptimist International of Humboldt Bay
 South Fork High School Booster Club for Punt, Pass & Pink
 Times Standard for our media sponsorship
 Union Labor Health Foundation for your grant in support of BGHP's Young Women with Cancer program
 Yarn for the Krista Suh Presentation & Book Signing event proceeds
 Vacation Raffle Sponsors and destination donors

To receive a copy of our 2017 Annual Report with a complete listing of contributors, please contact us at (707) 825-8345.



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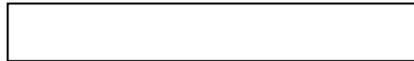
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