

## Telling

By Mary Meengs, MD, Medical Consultant

Many years ago, when my surgeon was arranging an operative biopsy for what I was pretty sure would be breast cancer, she agreed to admit me under an alias. I was a young resident at a smallish hospital, and I didn't feel ready for all the nurses and clerks and other residents I knew to see my name on the surgical schedule.

Within days of my diagnosis, my feelings had changed completely, and I was fine with the word spreading. I remember how exhausted I was the night before my lumpectomy, spending hours on the phone telling my sisters and multiple close friends (before the days when I could send a group email!). I did feel the need to "manage" telling my parents, with a highly choreographed phone call a week later.

That's my story, and it's made me extra curious to hear about each new woman I meet here. With whom does she decide to share her news, and how soon and to what degree? Is she burdened with the dread of telling certain people, or has she already had an unhappy experience regarding the "reveal"?

Of course, there's not one right strategy. For many, it seems to be an evolution, and the outward sharing sort of parallels the path of inward acceptance. It can take some time and practice to be able to casually say "I have breast cancer" (or uterine, cervical, ovarian). Often, diagnosis brings an avalanche of shock, fear, and even betrayal. To speak the "C" word aloud makes it official and real, and crumbles our favorite coping mechanism of denial.

But even after the reality has settled in, there are some common reasons to limit the sharing.

**Modesty.** Discussing one's "private parts" with anyone outside the immediate family is frequently uncomfortable, and even taboo in certain cultures. With breast cancer there's the additional fact of involving an external, visually obvious and often sexualized body part. A lot of women feel self-conscious about the appearance of their body in general, and their breasts in particular, even without a cancer diagnosis. The fear of extra attention can make some women want to keep their diagnosis and treatment details in the shadows.



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## BGHP is celebrating our 20th Anniversary

with a free  
Healing Journey's mini-conference  
to inspire, connect & celebrate!



## CANCER as a TURNING POINT From Surviving to Thriving

Saturday, September 9th  
3:00-5:00 PM  
Sequoia Conference Center

Pre-registration is requested at  
[www.healingjourneys.org](http://www.healingjourneys.org)



**Dr. Michael Finkelstein**, The Slow Medicine Doctor®, is the executive director of The Slow Medicine Foundation and is the founder and medical director of SunRaven: The Home of Slow Medicine. He is the author of *Slow Medicine: Hope and Healing for Chronic Illness*. Trained at premier institutes for both conventional and integrative medicine, and certified in both Internal Medicine and Integrative-Holistic Medicine, he is the recipient of numerous distinctions. You can learn more at [SlowMedicineDoctor.com](http://SlowMedicineDoctor.com).



**Jonna Tamases** is an actress and 3-time cancer survivor (Hodgkin's Disease, Large-Cell Lymphoma, Breast Cancer). She has turned her experience into a highly acclaimed one-woman show, *Jonna's Body, Please Hold*. The show has received rave reviews and many awards.

This moving and hilarious one-woman play takes us on a wild ride into the realm of health, illness, joy, and the beauty of life. More information at [jonnasbody.com](http://jonnasbody.com).

Funding is being sought to make this event **no charge** for those attending, donations are greatly appreciated and tax deductible.

**Approved for Continuing Education Credits for Nurses**

Postage/printing costs donated by the Humboldt Independent Practice

Managing reactions. Someone newly diagnosed with cancer has a lot to worry about, even if her prognosis is good. With every loved one she tells, she has to wonder, “Will he fall apart?”, or “Will she be so scared she avoids me?”, or “Will she say things to make me feel worse?” Though most everyone means well, it’s awkward to be told bad news and hard to know how to react and what to say. It can be exhausting for a patient to have to constantly reassure family and friends, or to report that she’s feeling better than she really is in order to avoid causing excessive concern. Or even worse, to defend her choices and past behaviors.

Work consequences. It doesn’t happen often, but there are instances when someone might lose a job or promotion after having revealed their diagnosis. It’s hard to take time for treatment without the boss and coworkers noticing, and it’s understandable to have concerns about being treated differently.

Managing advice. People hold very strongly their beliefs about the right thing to do after a cancer diagnosis, even someone else’s. And they can’t help but share. Even recognizing that they mean well, it can be overwhelming to debate everything from your treatment choices to your diet. Plus, every piece of advice is likely attached to a story of someone else’s cancer.

Telling kids. This is usually especially difficult...how to explain why Mommy has lost her hair and is staying home and seems tired, without unduly frightening your kids. Most experts recommend against trying to hide the obvious, and tailoring the messages to the age and maturity of the child.

At the BGHP, we strive to be the easiest place possible for you to talk about your experiences and feelings. You’ll hear tips, but we try to make sure everything here is said with caring and support and no judgment. We have resources and some lived wisdom on talking to children and spouses. We never get tired of hearing a new client’s story and her unique experience, and if she’d rather just come to support group and listen to others, that’s OK too. Give us a call or drop by.

**BGHP Staff:**

Executive Director - Rose Gale-Zoellick, MSW, MPH  
Client Services Director - Lisa Petterson, RN  
Medical Consultants - Julie Ohnemus, MD & Mary Meengs, MD  
Client Services Coordinator - Brenda Elvine-Kreis  
Office Manager - Barbara Sage  
Volunteer Coordinator/Resource Asst. - Amanda Near  
Breast Health Navigator - Madelin Amir, NP  
GYN Cancer Support Group Facilitator-Rebecca Zettler, RN  
RN Latina Patient Navigator - Uma Bingham

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**From the Executive Director**

Rose Gale-Zoellick

BGHP celebrates 20 years of service to our community this year! This is a big milestone and we invite you to help BGHP celebrate, because your involvement has helped us reach this milestone! Whether you got information or support while dealing with a cancer concern for yourself or a loved one, or you volunteered, bought vacation raffle tickets, attended our Fall Concert or sent donations - YOU helped BGHP help others in our community!

June 1997 was officially the month that the original support group intentionally evolved into a peer-support group. Then in 2004 it became an official non-profit, helping those in our community who sought information, support and hope for breast cancer concerns. In the Fall issue of this newsletter, our Founder, Julie Ohnemus, MD, and other founding mothers will talk about the impact of that evolution.

Over those 20 years, a lot has changed and some things have stayed the same. The dilemma of telling loved ones or employers about one’s cancer diagnosis is still a shared experience among people diagnosed with cancer. What is new are rapidly changing cancer treatment options. BGHP’s staff and volunteers learn alongside clients in this new medical landscape.

Just as it was 20 years ago, each day as the support groups meet, there is anticipation as clients gather to share good news or difficult news about their circumstances. The people at support groups are there to listen, perhaps share similar experiences, but always to honor each other’s experiences. This compassionate witnessing is the basis for healing and healthy survivorship.

The anniversary celebrations are to honor you, our clients and grassroots supporters. I hope you will join us at one of five community-based celebrations being held throughout Humboldt County. Thanks to supporters like you, a couple of generous grant funders, and supportive business donors, these upcoming events will be free of charge.

As we enter our 20th year, our board of directors, longtime supporters and I are amazed that an independent grassroots cancer resource center can provide free services to all clients. You all made that possible. We do NOT get financial support from large organizations like the American Cancer Society and its Relay for Life, nor are we an affiliate of any particular hospital (such as St. Joseph Hospital) or large breast cancer organizations (like Komen or Avon). Grassroots means that YOU, volunteers, supporters, clients and donors are the foundation and the building blocks for local services for people dealing with cancer. We hope you will continue to help our 100% homegrown, grassroots cancer resource center.

I look forward to seeing you at an upcoming anniversary event. If you have ideas to share to help strengthen BGHP and our support of local folks, always feel free to contact me at 707-825-8345 x-110 or at rosegz@hcbhp.org.



## Young Breast Cancer Survivors: Becoming a Wounded Healer

By Brenda Elvine-Kreis, Client Services Coordinator

About nine young women, who have been diagnosed with a breast or gynecologic cancer, attend BGHP's Young Women's Support Group (YWWSG) on a regular basis. They range in age from 27 to 48 years old. This is *their* group—they decide the format of the group: do they want to spend the time sharing and catching up with one another, discussing a particular topic, listening to a guest speaker, or going for a walk, etc.? As the facilitator of this group, I have the privilege of witnessing the camaraderie that these young women develop with one another. Whether it is their first time attending the group or the twentieth time, they share a beautiful, deep bond.

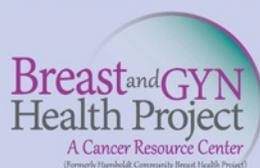
Young women face some unique challenges when it comes to breast or gynecologic cancers. At a time in life most often reserved for family and career, issues of treatment, recovery and survivorship are suddenly a top priority. Concerns can range from a potential loss of fertility, telling and caring for children, maintaining careers and retaining jobs, coping with challenges surrounding intimacy and sexuality, to facing their own mortality at such a young age. Once their treatments are finally completed, they often struggle with what is known among cancer survivors as "fear of recurrence," significant worry and anxiety that the cancer will come back. In addition, they will have to come to terms with what a cancer diagnosis, and the inevitable side effects resulting from treatment will mean for their long term health and survival.

At the YWWSG, participants listen, share, and encourage one another through each stage of their diagnosis, treatment and survivorship. Recently, a newly diagnosed woman attended the group for the first time and shared that she is a single mother, continuing to work while receiving chemotherapy. She confessed that this has proven to be more difficult than she initially anticipated. The group supported her to consider taking time off from work and to put herself first. One participant, who empathized with what she is going through, having already been there herself, reached out and handed the new participant a slip of paper with her

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### 4 DESTINATIONS ~ 4 WINNERS

## 16th Annual VACATION BENEFIT Raffle



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  
40/\$250 100/\$500 225/\$1000

Drawing June 9, 2017 - 8 p.m. - Arcata Exchange  
Need not be present to win

MORE INFO AT: [WWW.BGHP.ORG](http://WWW.BGHP.ORG)



**MAUI**  
Seven nights with airfare for two



**BANFF, ALBERTA**  
Seven nights with airfare for two



**ASHLAND, OR**  
Two nights for two



**TRINIDAD, CA**  
Two nights for two

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!



**Can you help sell a packet of 15 tickets? Or, table at the Farmers' Market? Call 825-8345 if you can!**

The beauty of the vacation raffle is the outstanding efforts of volunteers selling raffle tickets to those they know or meet in the community. Not only is this an incredible fundraiser, but it raises awareness about the value of our services to people who might need help.

## 36th Annual Atalanta's Victory Run & Walk

**An all women event!**



This year the run/walk will take place on **Mother's Day, Sunday May 14th at 10 a.m.**

There will be a 2-mile run & walk or an 8k run & walk, starts & ends at the Arcata Co-op.

Proceeds from the event will be shared with the Breast and GYN Health Project and local running teams.

**Sign up now!** Online registration at - [www.6rrc.com](http://www.6rrc.com)

## 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 Hospital's Free Mammography** grant from the National Breast Cancer Foundation.

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name, telephone number, and the words, "Call me anytime" written on it. This simple act of kindness and compassion helped to quickly establish a deep connection between the two women.

On another occasion, two group members caught up about their latest radiation treatments. They compared burns and exchanged remedies to alleviate the pain and redness. In doing so, they found solace in knowing they weren't alone. United in their experience, they then went on to share helpful tips with the group members who had yet to begin radiation treatment.

I listened as they laughed while discussing the ludicrousness of the treatment-related side effects they have had to endure in order to fight their cancer. One participant commented between giggles, "Where else can we go and talk about this kind of stuff?!" My heart warms with the knowledge that these women are making a difference in one another's lives. In addition to surviving their own cancer, they have gained greater awareness, understanding and empathy for others facing similar circumstances. In doing so, they have become more than survivors, they have become Wounded Healers.

I can't help but think (or hope) that this group has offered these women a life line. Perhaps just knowing that they all have had to face such difficult circumstances is consolation that they are not alone. They have each other, and they have the support of the Breast and GYN Health Project. As they strive to heal one another, they too, are healed. We wrap our arms around one another sharing the wisdom of our own experience as well as our empathy for one another, as we heal from the wounds of cancer—Together.



### Wounded Healers

They are not born and they are not made . . .

They create themselves through conquering adversity, trial and error and extreme pain and suffering.

They conquer fear and find a way to speak their truth even when they are afraid.

In doing so they shine light for others who are lost and feeling alone, and in return their inner light ignites with renewed purpose.

A purpose greater than they ever could have imagined.

*By Turning Wounds into Wisdom & Globally Healing*

## Drop-In BGHP Cancer Support Services in Southern Humboldt

Garberville

Drop-In Outreach Site



First Wednesday of every month 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Drop by to talk or explore resources!

Heart of the Redwoods Community Hospice

464 Maple Lane, Garberville

For information call Marilyn at 923-9786 or

Lisa at 825-8345 x-115



When Safeway customers from Crescent City to Fortuna "round up for breast cancer" at the register in May, Safeway Foundation provides BGHP client services grant funding! Thank you!



BGHP is a registered charity for Amazon Smile.

Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible

AmazonSmile purchases to BGHP.

Just search for "Breast and GYN Health Project" when prompted. It's easy! Visit: [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)

1.877.411.3662  
Toll Free



Center for  
**CAR Donations**

### Are you interested in donating your vehicle?

Consider donating it to

*Breast and GYN Health Project*

It's hassle-free and your generosity is appreciated.

*Call Amanda, at BGHP, for more information.*

### Your Legacy Gift



**HUMBOLDT AREA FOUNDATION**

### 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, thank you!

To learn more, contact Rose Gale-Zoellick at 707-825-8345 or Chris Witt at HAF, 707-442-2993 ext. 302

## BGHP's 20th Birthday Celebration

Saturday, June 24th

3:00 - 6:00 PM

Bayside Grange, 2297 Jacoby Creek Rd

This fun, free event is to thank all of YOU for keeping BGHP's circle of support for people facing breast and gynecologic cancer (and sometimes other cancers) available through your involvement. Come share stories and capture our history, enjoy friends, food and music. We will also honor those who are no longer with us. For more information about this event please call BGHP at 707-825-8345.

### Celebrate

- 20 Years of Cancer Survivorship
- 2,750 clients who got support & info
- 75,000 contacts/services provided
- Over 32,000 volunteer hours of grassroots cancer support services!
- Many thousands of donations to keep the local, FREE cancer support resources available for all clients.



Sign up for BGHP's  
Monthly eNews

- Calendar of Activities
  - Volunteer/Survivor Spotlight
  - Lots of ways you can lend a hand
  - Paperless and no cost to subscribers
- Email [volunteer@hcbhp.org](mailto:volunteer@hcbhp.org) and we will add you to our Project e-News mailing list



Find us on  
Facebook

### Other Ways to Support our Services

- Help sell vacation raffle tickets, please
- Buy a library book, see wishlist in eNews
- Hold a fundraising event

### We are Forever Grateful to Our Contributors

*Thank you to 1288 individuals and businesses who generously donated since August. Space allows a partial listing of foundation, business and event supporters.*

- AmazonSmile shoppers
- Andree Wagner Peace Trust
- Arcata Artisan's Cooperative for Arts! Arcata partnership
- Arcata Foundation grant for low-income Arcata residents with cancer
- Arcata High School Girl's Volleyball
- Ayers Family Cremation
- BiCoastal Media radio stations
- Bidding for Good On-Line Auction donors, sponsors & bidders
- Buddy's Auto Center
- Heidi Bourne for the Mindfulness Meditation Classes
- Buddy's Auto Center's Pink Tow Truck in Arcata and Willow Creek
- California Cancer Crushers for Wings for A Cure proceeds
- Cypress Grove Chevre
- Dae's Jewelry Sales & donations of earrings to clients
- Donors to the Mary Scott Angel Fund & Integrative Wellness Fund
- Dutch Brothers donation of 100% of proceeds for a day
- Fall Concert volunteers, sponsors and event-goers
- Heart of the Redwoods Hospice for donating use of space for services
- HSU Football for breast cancer awareness night
- Hops in Humboldt for scholarships for seniors for educational event
- Humboldt Association of Realtors
- Humboldt Herbals for "I Love Me" Tea in ChemoKits
- Humboldt Redwood Company for the ChemoKit grant
- Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship for a special event
- Kalos Salon for support with wigs for clients
- KHSU
- KHUM & Lost Coast Communications
- KIEM TV - News Channel 3
- Richard & Emily Levin Foundation
- Linden & Co. Professionals donation of 100% of their day to BGHP
- Local High Schools for Punt, Pass & Pink events
- Mad River Brewery for Pints for Non-Profits Day
- Mad River Radio Group for Year 5 of "Punt, Pass & Pink"
- Marla Joy & all the Zumbathon sponsors & instructors
- McKinleyville High School Girl's JV & Varsity Volleyball teams and sponsors for a very successful "Dig Pink" campaign.
- McLean Foundation for Eel River Valley Site support
- MiaBo Foundation
- Michaele Whiteley & City of Eureka's Party in Pink Zumbathon
- Mr. Humboldt Pageant Donors
- National Breast Cancer Foundation for client services grant
- Newsletter underwriters
- Patricia D. and William B. Smullin Foundation for client services grant
- All Humboldt County Ray's Food Place stores and Shop Smart-Redway customers for "Register Round-Up" donations
- Redwood Capital Bank for "Casual Day" employee contributions
- Redwood River Resort for donation jar proceeds
- Safeway Foundation for the client services grant
- St Joseph Hospital Care for the Poor Grant for patient navigation
- Sales for Survivors - all 65 business participants & shoppers
- Soroptimists International of Eureka and Humboldt Bay
- Times Standard for the large media support in October
- Union Labor Health Foundation for a patient navigation grant
- Vacation Raffle trip donors, sponsors, volunteers & ticket buyers
- Visiting Angels for donating use of their Fortuna Office Space

To receive a copy of our 2016 Annual Report with a complete listing of contributors, please contact us at (707) 825-8345, or view the program and fiscal reports at [www.bghp.org](http://www.bghp.org)



987 8th Street  
Arcata, CA 95521

(707) 825-8345  
(707) 825-8384 FAX  
Email: [info@hcbhp.org](mailto:info@hcbhp.org)  
Website: [www.bghp.org](http://www.bghp.org)

Client Services Drop-in Hours  
Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
After hours by appointment

Administration, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Garberville 1st Wednesdays 1 - 3 p.m.

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**Support Groups**

Meetings held at the Project Office, 987 8th St., Arcata, unless otherwise noted. Meeting times may change. Call 825-8345 to confirm or to add your name to the reminder call list.

<p><b><u>Arcata Breast Cancer Support Group</u></b> 2nd &amp; 4th Thursdays of the Month, 4:30-6:00 p.m.</p> <p><b><u>Gynecologic Cancer Support Group</u></b> 2nd &amp; 4th Tuesdays of the Month, 3:00-4:30 p.m.</p> <p><b><u>Young Women's Support Group</u></b> Call for information.</p> <p><b><u>Lymphoma Group hosted by BGHP</u></b> 1st Tuesday, 4:00-5:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b><u>Advanced Disease Group</u></b> For those living with Stage IV Disease. Every Monday, 1:00-2:30 p.m.</p> <p><b><u>Amazon Writers</u></b> Explore creative writing as a path to healing. (Call to be put on waiting list for next series.)</p> <p><b><u>Garberville Outreach Site - Drop-in</u></b> 1st Wednesdays, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Heart of the Redwoods Hospice, Garberville</p>
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*Special Thanks to these Sponsors for Underwriting this Newsletter*



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The Health Decision Center  
Shared Decision Making resources  
for the community and patients  
A program of the Humboldt Independent Practice Association



**Humboldt IPA**