

—Nancy Matlock (1948-1994)

"Hopefully, with community support, WomenCARE can begin to mobilize the activist energy that exists in Santa Cruz to take a stand against the nation's number one killer."

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Women's Cancer Advocacy, Resources & Education  
P.O. BOX 944 · SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061 · 457-2273

WomenCARE

## WomenCARE's Statement of Philosophy

WomenCARE is a community of women which provides advocacy, resources, education and support to all women with cancer, their families, friends, and health practitioners throughout diagnosis, healing, surviving, or dying.

WomenCARE is directed and led primarily by women with cancer or a cancer history.

WomenCARE respects and depends upon the wisdom that comes from a diversity of culture, economic background, age, sexual orientation, and physical ability and thus strives to be an organization embracing the widest diversity of women.

Cancer weaves innumerable changes—small and profound—into women's lives. We acknowledge cancer as a complicated disease that can strike any woman. We believe that no woman is to blame for getting cancer. WomenCARE honors the unique relationship each individual has to cancer.

WomenCARE helps women to explore diagnostic and treatment choices from worldwide and multicultural options using information and common sense. We honor and respect a woman's individual decisions, including choosing not to begin or not to continue treatment.

In coalition with other organizations, WomenCARE is committed to uncovering and challenging the current politics of cancer. We strive to rectify the insufficient funding for prevention, education, treatment, and research of women's cancers as well as the inequitable access to medical and alternative treatments and quality support services.

WomenCARE understands the necessity of, and is committed to, creating an organizational structure and process which promotes the health and well-being of all women involved in WomenCARE.

WomenCARE's services are provided FREE to women with cancer (or a cancer history) and their families and friends. For more information, call 457-CARE (457-2273).

Our gratitude to The Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County and The Soroptomists of Mid-Santa Cruz County for providing funds to produce and mail this newsletter.

# WOMEN CARE

SPRING 2003

Women's Cancer Advocacy, Resources & Education

FREE SUPPORTIVE SERVICES FOR WOMEN WITH CANCER

*We proudly invite you to WomenCARE's Spring Benefit*

## Women's Voices: A Night of Jazz

**Saturday, May 10, 7:30pm**

**Mother's Day Weekend**

**Rio Theatre in Santa Cruz**

Join us for WomenCARE's first annual *Women's Voices Spring Benefit*. *Women's Voices* will feature *A Night of Jazz*, highlighting several of our talented local jazz vocalists.

Sharing the stage will be **Claudia Villela, Lori Rivera, Pipa Piñon, Ann Whittington, and Paula Alder**.

Tickets go on sale Friday, April 11 at Bookshop Santa Cruz, Harts for the Home, Paradise Surf Shop, Bookworks, and Herland.

*\$18, \$20 door and \$50 gold circle*



## One Woman's Spiritual Healing Journey

**Elsa C. Aguilera's keynote speech for In Celebration of the Muse, 2002**

In March 1996 my dream job as a science resource teacher in a local school I had helped found was suddenly terminated and I found myself in a new job at a new school. I also felt constantly ill and came down with colds or the flu, one after another. I was a 49-year-old, middle class woman with a graduate degree, who had never had a physical exam until my husband John finally nagged me into going for one. Until then an annual pap test was as far as I had

ever dared tread into the world of antiseptic odors and dangling plastic tubes. My mother had been a chiropractor and my background was more attuned to holistic medicine. The world of conventional medicine was absolutely terrifying.

On Good Friday 1997, I was diagnosed with Stage II Breast Cancer. My life would forever change. Before the initial shock wore off, two malignant tumors had been removed from my

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It's very gratifying to participate in the growth of a vital organization which is committed to the health and well-being of everyone involved. WomenCARE's staff has more than quadrupled in size over the past four years and is on the verge of growing once again. We have received a grant from the **California Endowment**, which will fund a much-needed full time Developer and Coordinator position for our outreach program to Spanish speaking women, *Entre Nosotras*. As we prepare to welcome a new member to our team, we are appreciating the supportive internal culture of WomenCARE. We have been committed to making decisions through collaboration and consensus, even during this period of rapid growth. We have built creative, resilient organizational structures as we have refined our deep respect for each other. And we realize how fortunate we are to work within an organization whose philosophy of dedication to health and well being extends to our entire working structure. At every level—our board, our volunteer teams, and our staff—we collaborate with an outstanding degree of mutual respect.

Two of the articles in this issue offer

*At every level—our board,  
our volunteer teams, and  
our staff—we collaborate  
with an outstanding degree  
of mutual respect.*

direct insights into how WomenCARE has supported the health and well-being of individual women. In her speech about her personal cancer journey, Elsa Aguilera describes the importance of sharing stories—woman-to-woman—as she faced overwhelming uncertainties.

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## WOMENCARE

617-B Water Street  
Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
(831) 457-CARE/2273

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# Peer Navigator Summary of Findings

*By Lynne Wittenberg, MPH, Project Coordinator/Research Liaison  
In collaboration with the Peer Navigator Program team.*

"We were able to talk about things that I hadn't talked about with anybody. I had a wonderful support group of family and friends, but this was special. This was someone who knew what I was going through, and I could look at her and say, 'Wow, a year later she's healthy, she's back in her life, and that's how I'm going to be.'" These are the words of Shirley, who participated in a one-to-one peer counseling and support program serving women with newly-diagnosed breast cancer.

*Marge was there  
to give me the support and  
information that I needed  
all through the treatment—  
and afterwards, too.*

In July of 2000, WomenCARE and Stanford University launched the Peer Navigator Project, a program aimed at preventing loss of quality of life and reducing distress during the initial diagnosis and treatment phases of breast cancer. We recently concluded the pilot study of the program and we are excited to share our findings and report back to the community.

The pilot study investigated how a Peer Navigator Program might improve the quality of life for women newly diagnosed with breast cancer ("Sojourners") when they are carefully matched with, and mentored by, a trained and supervised volunteer, who is herself a breast cancer survivor ("Navigators"). Navigator and Sojourner matches are based on information indicating the preferences of the individuals. For instance, a Sojourner may feel it is particularly important to be matched with a woman who has had the same kind of surgery or chemotherapy, or it may be more important to her to be matched with someone who also has young children. An appreciation for this human element was expressed by Kitty, another Sojourner, when she included a personal note with her questionnaire, "I liked the fact that WomenCARE thought about who would be a good match for me emotionally and intellectually. It was so helpful just knowing there was someone who was open, reassuring, and supportive that I could talk to."

In this pilot study, we recruited and trained 39 Navigators in six training sessions. We also recruited and matched 42 Sojourners with Navigators according to each woman's expressed demographic and diagnostic/treatment preferences. Some Navigators were successfully matched more than once. Each Navigator/ Sojourner pair commits to a three-month relationship with at least one contact between them every week. Relationships can be renewed upon mutual agreement every three months.

Our data shows matches lasted from 4-6 months and, indeed, some even

# Program: from the Pilot Study

longer by mutual choice. Sojourners most often indicated a desire for peer support throughout the duration of active treatment. Anecdotally, we continue to hear that some Navigator/Sojourner pairs, after leaving the program, are still in contact with each other, demonstrating how enduring this relationship can be. The most frequent type of contact between the Navigator/Sojourner pairs was by phone.

Participants completed periodic surveys, which enabled us to assess the impact of the program. Our results demonstrate a stronger indication than we had guessed that women matched with a Navigator maintain their quality of life and actually improve in some areas, including a significant reduction in distress. This was warmly expressed in another note from Shirley. "The first day of my [radiation] treatment, I got very nervous and upset lying on the table and seeing this big machine; and I got freaked out about it. I called my Navigator when I got home and told her what I was experiencing. The next day, she sent me some visualization tapes on dealing with radiation. It was a blessing. I went back to my treatment after that totally relaxed. Marge was there to give me support and information that I needed all through the treatment—and afterwards, too."

The pilot data also suggests that the more empathic and effective the Navigator, the better their Sojourner's quality of life. However, there was a suggestive trend cautioning us that more empathic Navigators sometimes took their work home with them and became slightly more distressed themselves. We believe this did not happen when the Navigators regularly attended a monthly support group that provides continuing education for them. Overall, on many of our outcome measures, Navigators remained mostly unchanged, with high levels of quality-of-life and low levels of distress. Marge's experience was not uncommon. "As a Navigator, I found great satisfaction in listening attentively,



exchanging information, helping with complex decision-making, and being able to allay some of the fear that comes with a cancer diagnosis. As a bonus, I enjoyed laughter and love with new friends who continue to be an important part of my life."

Surprisingly, as the study progressed, Navigators seemed to become less satisfied with their medical team. At a recent focus group, Navigators told us that their decreasing satisfaction with their medical team was related to getting further away from their own diagnosis and, subsequently, receiving less attention and support from their physicians.

With continued funding from the California Breast Cancer Research Program, we are currently conducting a three-year, randomized study to assess the efficacy of the program. Before being randomized (a process akin to the 50/50 toss of a

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Continued from page 1

Lynne Wittenberg's article on the Peer Navigator Program describes some of the research findings which reflect the positive impact of one-to-one support. Highlighting the reports of women who have participated, this study measures the healing value of learning from the first-hand experiences of others who have traveled the same frightening territory.

In another report on recent research, nutritionist Jeanne Wallace, explaining highly technical scientific information with elegant clarity, describes a nutritionally based healing model which is gaining significant recognition in cancer prevention and treatment literature.

At a time when the need for and value of our services is being clearly documented, WomenCARE is facing some financial challenges. Budget cuts at state and local levels are adversely impacting all the community agencies. *Entre Nosotras*, WomenCARE's free support services to Spanish speaking women with cancer—considered to be one of the most successful programs anywhere in the country—has been supported largely through grants from our local jurisdictions. These funds have been cut over the past six months by at least 10%, with further cuts anticipated in the near future. Our

*It will be a high priority [of WomenCARE] to generate the financial backing to continue offering [these] essential and responsible one-to-one support for newly-diagnosed women.*

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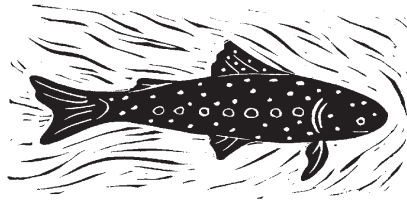
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# — Inflammation: An Essential

Many people are surprised to learn that inflammation and cancer are linked. The relationship was first discovered in the 1980's when the results of large-scale trials on anti-inflammatory drugs (such as aspirin and drugs prescribed for arthritis) noted that, over the long-term, patients who took these drugs on an ongoing basis had remarkably reduced rates of cancer. Since then, over 300 studies have been published linking inflammation to the risk of cancer and exploring the role of anti-inflammatory agents as an adjunctive treatment for cancer patients. Excess inflammation has been linked to all types of solid tumors (including breast, prostate, ovarian, colon, lung, head-and-neck, pancreatic, skin, and brain cancers). In addition, the inflammatory process has been shown to increase tumor cell proliferation, promote invasion and metastasis, foster angiogenesis (the development of new blood vessels that fuels tumor growth), and to suppress immune function.

## **WHERE DOES INFLAMMATION COME FROM?**

Most of the research on inflammation and cancer has focused on an enzyme called cyclooxygenase, or COX for short. The COX enzyme is responsible for synthesizing inflammatory compounds called prostaglandins. There are 2 families of COX enzymes, COX-1 and COX-2. These compounds (particularly those in the 2-series family) are highly inflammatory. Research has shown that in most healthy tissue, COX-1 is the predominant COX



enzyme, but in precancerous and tumor tissue, COX-2 is unregulated. Drugs like aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) block COX (both COX-1 and COX-2). Recently a new class of drugs that selectively blocks only COX-2 has been developed and approved by the FDA: Celebrex and Vioxx. Many clinical trials are currently underway to demonstrate the efficacy of these drugs in improving outcomes for cancer patients.

Interestingly, there is a second family of enzymes, that also creates inflammation, called lipoxygenase or LOX for short. In the U.S. there are no prescription drugs available to block this pathway. For many types of cancer, LOX is at least as important as COX in promoting cancer growth and metabolism. Additionally, LOX-driven inflammation has been shown to be a major culprit in promoting the spread of cancer (metastasis). When a person takes a prescription drug that blocks only COX-2 the inflammatory process can be shunted toward LOX. The ideal solution is to block both COX and LOX. Several herbs and nutritional agents can do this (see below).

## **HOW CAN I CURB INFLAMMATION?**

First step: watch the fats you eat! The inflammatory enzymes, COX and LOX, discussed above, create inflammation by acting on fats to create inflammatory compounds. The fats you eat in

your diet become the cell membrane for every cell in your body, including any cancer cells. Some fats, called the omega-6 fats, create inflammatory compounds; whereas other fats, the omega-3 fats, create anti-inflammatory compounds. The omega-6 fats include: meat and dairy fat, vegetable oils (including corn, soybean, sunflower, and safflower), margarine, and hydrogenated oils. You'll want to eat these oils sparingly. Banish margarine! Choose baked and steamed foods over fried ones. Pick low-fat or nonfat dairy, skinless poultry, and lean meats. Read labels so you can steer clear of foods that contain partially hydrogenated oils.

The omega-3 fats found in fish and flax seed oil are beneficial; when COX or LOX act on these fats, anti-inflammatory compounds are created that can boost immune function, reduce swelling and inflammation, and help suppress tumor growth. A brilliant German researcher, Dr. Johanna Budwig, won international recognition for her successful work with cancer patients by emphasizing a high intake of omega-3 oils, such as flaxseed oil. And studies with fish oil supplements have shown prolonged survival in cancer patients.

Flax oil must be kept refrigerated and cannot be cooked. It goes rancid easily so purchase only refrigerated products clearly marked with a pressing or expiration date, and discard the oil if it has a rancid odor or bitter taste. One to three tablespoons of flax oil daily can be added to smoothies, made into salad dressing or mixed with a small amount of butter to make a

# Target in Cancer Therapy

By Jeanne M. Wallace, Ph.D., C.N.C

“better butter.” Eating cold-water fish (e.g., tuna, salmon, cod, mackerel, herring, and sardines) 3-4 times a week may also help. I recommend sardines over larger cold-water fish, as they are less contaminated with mercury and ocean-borne pesticides and toxins. Purified fish oil supplements are also an option.

Olive oil is an omega-9. it is neutral (does not contribute to inflammation) and healthful to use in moderation.

It's also important to eat a diet rich in antioxidants by increasing your intake of deeply colored fruits and vegetables. In addition to the action of the COX and LOX enzymes on fats creating inflammation, high levels of free radicals act to oxidize the fats in our cell membranes, creating a type of inflammatory compounds called isoprostanes. These compounds are several times stronger than COX, or LOX, derived inflammation. While many people are quick to reach for antioxidant pills (like vitamins A, C, E, selenium, and zinc), the antioxidants found in fruits and vegetables are much more potent than those found in any pill. Aim to “EAT EIGHT” (6-7 half-cup servings of vegetables and 1-2 servings of fruits) every day. An added bonus: these foods are packed with phytonutrients that may also help fight cancer.

Several botanical agents are capable of blocking either COX or LOX (or both). The most common anti-inflammatory supplements are bromelain (an enzyme from pineapple),

curcumin, boswellia, quercetin, green tea, garlic, grape seed extract, bilberry, and ginger; though there are dozens of other anti-inflammatory herbs, too. Several of these anti-inflammatory herbs have research studies demonstrating their value in helping to control cancer or improve survival in cancer patients. The best approach is to select a combination product that includes several of these herbs which work synergistically. Some of these herbs are contraindicated under certain conditions, or may have interactions with prescription medications,

so please consult a knowledgeable nutritionist or herbalist who can guide you in the appropriate product and dosage for your needs.



## **HOW CAN I TELL IF INFLAMMATION IS A PROBLEM FOR ME?**

The type of inflammation we are talking about here is generally hidden; you may have no obvious signs or symptoms (like swelling, heat, or pain). However, a simple blood test your doctor can order will tell you if you have elevated inflammation that needs your attention. This test is called a C-Reactive protein. It is a widely available and inexpensive test (about \$25-75, depending on the lab).

Several research studies have shown this test is correlated to prognosis in cancer patients. For example, a study published in the June 2001 issue of the journal *Nutrition & Cancer* reported

that C-Reactive protein test results directly correlated with survival in patients with breast, lung, colon, or gastric cancer. I recommend taking this test and, if your results are elevated, intervening to bring them down into the normal range.

Make sure to ask for the newest version of the test, called the high-sensitivity C-Reactive protein. Don't take this test if you have an active infection, which can falsely elevate the results. Surgery, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy also elevate the results, so wait at least one month after surgery or radiation and 2-3 weeks after chemotherapy to run the test. If your result is elevated above the normal range you may want to intervene with dietary changes and nutritional supplements to decrease your inflammation, then repeat the test to monitor the efficacy of your intervention.

*NOTE: For a more scientific treatment of the material in this article refer to Dr. Wallace's published review article (364 references), "Nutritional and Botanical Modulation of the Inflammatory Cascade—Eicosanoids, Cyclooxygenases, and Lipoygenases—as an Adjunct in Cancer Therapy" in the March 2002 issue of the journal Integrative Cancer Therapies ([www.sagepub.com](http://www.sagepub.com)). This article summarizes the published research linking inflammatory compounds to several types of cancer, describes research showing improved outcome for radiation therapy and chemotherapy using anti-inflammatory agents, and outlines a comprehensive dietary, nutritional and herbal protocol for curbing inflammation in cancer patients.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS & BENEFITS

CALL 457-2273 FOR INFORMATION

### THROUGHOUT APRIL

#### *Harts for the Home, Sample Sale*

All fabric books and swatches will be sold to the public. All proceeds will be donated to WomenCARE. Come check out the selection of material for your home at 1132 Soquel Avenue.

### SATURDAY, APRIL 5

#### *Spring Forward Against Cancer Gala*

The Santa Cruz Cancer Benefit Group's annual dinner benefit at Chaminade. Reception, dinner, silent auction (art, wine, vacations), and dancing. Black tie optional. Call SCCBG for details, 465-1989

### SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2003

#### *Party Like a Rock Star Festival: In honor of Christian Hamel*

At the Ideal Bar and Grill, SC Wharf, 2:00 p.m.-1:00 am. Raffle, food, and children's dance groups start at 2:00. Finish the day with an evening of live music. \$10 donation

### SATURDAY, MAY 10, 2003 (MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND)

#### *Women's Voices: A Night of Jazz*

See page 1 for details. Tickets go on sale April 11. \$18, \$20 door and \$50 gold circle seats, available at: **Bookshop Santa Cruz**, 1520 Pacific Avenue, 423-0900; **Harts for the Home**, 1132 Soquel Ave., 423-0114; **Herland**, 1014 Cedar Street, 429-6636; **Paradise Surf Shop**, 3961 Portola Drive, 462-3880; and **Bookworks**, 36 Rancho Del Mar Shopping Center, 688-4554.

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# Strike Out Against Cancer Bowling Benefit Report

By Diane Grunes



Enthusiasm ran high once again as participants bowled for fun, prizes, and trophies at WomenCARE's 5th Annual STRIKE OUT AGAINST CANCER Bowling Benefit this last October at the new Boardwalk Bowl. The event raised close to \$40,000 with 100% of the proceeds going directly towards WomenCARE's free services.

The STRIKE OUT AGAINST CANCER co-sponsors included Seagate Technology, Donald Richards, Brinks Trophy Shoppe, George Ow Family Properties, Robert Taren Attorney at Law, and Boardwalk Bowl. Over 50 local businesses helped support the event with their generous prize donations.

With 40 teams participating, the following teams and individuals went home with trophies: The highest team pledge total came from the team of Caroline Bliss-Isberg, a WomenCARE board member, Executive Director of the Cabrillo Stroke Center, and past winner of the same category. The individual with the highest individual pledge donation was, for the 2nd year in a row, Arriane Bliss, daughter of Caroline, with a total of \$3,002.50.

Carrie Whitley took the trophy for the highest game score with a 174, and the highest total team score trophy went to the team of Julie Furtado with a total of 590. The lowest game score was awarded to Lucy Saldavia, age 8, daughter of Sharon Saldavia, WomenCARE's board vice-president.

*This youngest group  
of bowlers—aged 14  
& 15—raised a total  
of \$3,579*

Best Team Costume trophy for the first session went to the team of Jessamyn Tardif. The second session prize went to the Witches, headed by Vicki Boriack, WomenCARE's board treasurer. Two teams tied for Best Costume in the third session. The Nerds, organized by captain Rachel Hawkins, also won in this category at last year's event, and, more impressive, this youngest group of bowlers—aged 14 & 15—raised a total of \$3,579. Second year team member Danielle Saporta impressed the crowd with a pledge total of \$1,492 which she alone raised for WomenCARE. The tie was shared by the Pink Ladies, looking fabulous with their very big hair and captained by Heidi Brancatelli. Heidi's team also won the Session 3 high score with a team total of 517.

As event coordinator, I want to thank committee members Carol Mendoza and Monica DaCosta; and volunteer coordinator, LaVerne Coleman; along with all the dedicated volunteers, bowlers and contributors, who helped create another successful WomenCARE bowling benefit. Our community is to be congratulated. At a time when there are so many areas of need in our county, our state, the nation, and the world, on behalf of WomenCARE, I want to thank all of our local supporters for their heartfelt gestures of love and support.

Mark your calendars: WomenCARE's 6th Annual Strike Out Against Cancer Saturday, October 25th, 2003.

# Shirts \$2 Unless Marked Otherwise

## WomenCARE Holds a Rummage Sale

By Diane Grunes

The idea began as a simple yard sale. Some clothes, lots of household items, books, toys, and games...the usual stuff. But then the donated goods started piling up, and up, and up. Our vision was altered and, as the pile grew, so did our event. A full-blown rummage sale was suddenly in our face. Well, not a rummage sale—more like an actual department store with hundreds of items, all divided into separate areas, with salespeople and lots of customers.

The success of the event was largely due to all of WomenCARE's hardworking volunteers, as well as local merchants and the community. Donations and loans came from San Lorenzo Lumber's Bob Butcher and Rick Hawkins, Omega Nu and Carol Simpkins, Stokes Signs and Steve Hosmer, Keith Henderson and Barry Swenson, Louise Hutchinson, Colin Alder, Bill Schultz, Leslie Bushman, and Ann Meyer.

Preparing for the sale required many hours of collecting, transporting, sorting, cleaning, displaying, pricing, and, finally, selling as much as possible. LaVerne Coleman, WomenCARE's Volunteer Coordinator, helped organize the volunteers. They included Mari Levine and Teresa Carley (they delivered their donated goods and never left...), Regina Henderson, Carol Mendoza, Raven Stevens, Vicki Boriack, Roberta Fama, Liza Livingston, Howie Grunes, Isabel Piekarski, Monique and Shannon, Robin Cross, Maribel Cuervo, Robin Hawkins, Lucy Garcia, Ricardo Gonzalez Lara, Connie Batten, Paula and Jessie Alder, Phyllis Wasserstrom, Joyce Mangouney, Ronna Pearce, and Shelley Hatch.

Impressive assistance also came from several Harbor High students who were fulfilling their community service credits. They were Anna Victoria Suarez, Brittany Romero, Danny Grunes, Kevin MacCaulay, Kevin Katsulis, and Colin Mitchell. Santa Cruz High's Graham Gelwicks also helped.

As coordinator of this monster rummage sale, I would like to thank all the volunteers, contributors, and shoppers for their support. After only 4 weeks of hard work, WomenCARE raised close to \$5,000.

## UPCOMING EVENTS & BENEFITS

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SEPTEMBER 13 & 14

### Healing Journeys

*Cancer As A Turning Point, From Surviving to Thriving*, a FREE two-day event for anyone touched by cancer—patients, survivors, friends, family, and healthcare providers—will be held at Veterans' Memorial Auditorium, Marin Civic Center, San Rafael, CA. Speakers include Lawrence LeShan, PhD, Alice Walker, Michael Lerner, PhD, Oriah Mountain Dreamer, plus many more.

Pre-registration is necessary. For on-line registration and information see [www.healingjourneys.org](http://www.healingjourneys.org). To receive a brochure, call (800) 423-9882.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Thanks to the following community members and organizations for their generous contributions that help WomenCARE maintain free services available to the Santa Cruz community.

**BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH**, sponsored by The Emerald Iguana Salon, \$2,331

**HARRY POTTER OPENING DAY BENEFIT**, sponsored by 41st Avenue Theater, Gary Culver & Clyda Basmajan, \$1,341

**JEAN DAY**, sponsored by Santa Cruz Medical Clinic, \$1,150

**MESSAGE-A-THON**, sponsored by Lupin Massage Institute, \$1,824

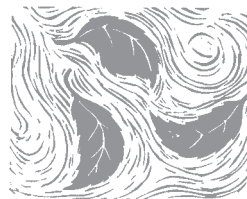
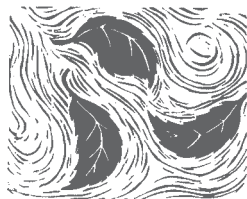
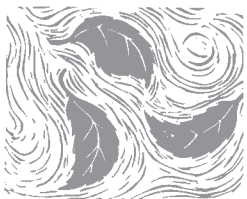
**RITA'S GIG**, sponsored by The Santa Cruz Cancer Benefit Group, \$1,000

**STAFF OF LIFE**, Share a Token program, \$199.05

**WOMENCARE NIGHT SPONSORED BY SHADOWBROOK RESTAURANT**, \$825.18

**WOMEN ON WAVES**, sponsored by Paradise Surf Shop & the Capitola Chamber of Commerce, \$1,459

**WRITING & THE SPIRITUAL LIFE BENEFIT WORKSHOP**, sponsored by Patrice Vecchione, \$750.00



## **WOMENCARE'S HEALING CIRCLE**

**OUR CURRENT LIST OF EDUCATIONAL  
AND EXPERIENTIAL GROUPS**

### *The Writing Circle*

**Meets 2nd and 4th Saturday  
each month, 10am–noon**

Open to the writer in each of us, this group allows for creative exploration in a supportive space right where you are. Each session is a surprise, our creations prompted by writing activities and the stories of our lives—bring your notebook, invite your muse. (Led by Marybeth Varcados)

### *Art for Healing*

**Meets 3rd Saturday each  
month, 10am–noon**

In a safe and encouraging atmosphere we paint, draw, glitter, glue, cut, tear, and use pastels, clay, natural and other materials to explore and express our deepest selves. No art experience necessary, just a willingness to play with art materials and listen tenderly to ourselves. (Led by Wendy Traber)

### *Spiritual Care Counseling*

**Individual sessions available**

Honoring all pathways, this spiritual counseling is individualized according to the needs and beliefs of each woman. Paulette holds the space for women to share, pray, sit in silence, channel spirit, or whatever moves them. (Led by Interfaith Minister, Paulette Forest)

### *Complementary Treatment Group*

**Meets 3rd Wednesday each  
month, 7–9pm**

An educational and collaborative group for women who want a safe place to gather, sort through, and share information about the many complementary cancer treatments. (Led by Robin London, LAc, Susan Beck, LAc, and Connie Batten, MFT)

# WomenCARE's FREE Cancer Support Groups

**PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE FOR EXACT MEETING DATES**

## *Daytime Drop-In Group*

12:30 - 2:00 Tuesdays

## *Friends and Family Groups*

*Open to family members and loved ones of anyone who has cancer.*

*Call to see which group is right for you.*

7:00 - 8:30 2nd & 4th Mondays

6:30 - 8:00 1st & 3rd Thursdays

## *Ongoing Groups*

Post-Treatment Groups

The Metastatic Group

The Healing Circle: Writing Circle

Art for Healing

Spiritual Counseling

One-Time Workshops

**ALL MEETINGS ARE HELD AT THE**

**WOMENCARE OFFICE, 617-B WATER STREET**

**PLEASE CALL BEFORE ATTENDING YOUR FIRST MEETING 457-2273**

# Support for Grieving Teens

*In collaboration with The Center for Grief and Loss of Hospice Caring Project*

Teens, ages 13–18, are invited to a special evening of conversation, music, and food on **Thursday, May 1**. A parent meeting will be held separately at the same location.

When a family member is diagnosed with a serious illness, shock waves reverberate in all directions. Extra stress can occur when there are children in the family. Often, adults are so overwhelmed by all of the new information and looming decisions that they don't understand the pain and confusion their children are experiencing. Older kids are often asked to take on new responsibilities—housecleaning, caring for younger siblings, driving to doctor's appointments, or meal preparation. Everyone seems to move into overdrive.

Teens can end up feeling very lonely. Everyone seems to be ignoring their needs, and no one seems to understand how life has changed, not even friends. They long for things to return to the way they were before the illness. Talking with others who are facing the same challenges can break the isolation and help them feel not so crazy in this chaotic time. **Facilitated by Kris Cole and Debra Houston, LMFT.**

*Call WomenCARE (457-2273) or Hospice Caring Project (688-7684) for information and registration.*

## Encircled

The sun passes over the sundial and we count our hours by it. The sun sets we and we count our days. When I was diagnosed with uterine cancer, the sun went out of my life. Cancer became an internal terrorist intent upon killing me with cold brutality. I formed a morbid bond with cancer and my life became defined by it. I never dreamed during those first months that cancer would be the catalyst for the joyful experiences I have had in WomenCARE's Healing Circles.

From my first moments in the Writing Circle, I knew I had been given a priceless gift of camaraderie with women who have incredible wit, compassionate hearts, honesty, dignity, and courage—facing their own mortality with laughter, grief, and a strong will to live. I have come to care deeply about them. As mortal beings, none of us will make it out of this life alive. This being accepted, we get on with the adventure of living. I never considered myself a talented artist, but the *Art for Healing Circle* is not about talent. It is about using art as a medium for self-exploration.

The leaders of these circles—Joan Schatz, Marybeth Varcados, and Wendy Traber—are all women who have had cancer. They are kindred spirits who provide a healthy, supportive environment conducive to vital self-expression. I am deeply grateful for their caring hearts, their time, their encouragement, and their experience.

## WOMENCARE'S HEALING CIRCLE WORKSHOPS

**ONE-TIME HEALING CIRCLE WORKSHOPS ARE FREE OF CHARGE**

### *Nurturing Touch Workshop*

**Saturday, April 26**

Touch can be a wonderfully powerful expression of love, concern, and healing energies. This is a workshop for anyone with an intent to help others. Steve Eabry is a certified practitioner with 20 years of eclectic training and experience. He is a published writer and is an editorial advisor to *Massage Magazine*. Class size is limited to 20. Couples are encouraged, and individuals are equally welcomed. Call WomenCARE to sign up. Registration is essential. (Facilitated by Steve Eabry, CMT)

### *Celebrating Life, Looking at Death, Creating More Peace*

**Saturday, May 3, 10 am–4 pm**

Let's come together in a safe space that we create, to explore and move through some of the dark, scary places we fear. There will be experiential exercises, lots of opportunity for personal work and inner discovery, creative activities, and even fun and laughter along with plenty of tissues and tears. Call WomenCARE to sign up. Registration is essential. (Facilitated by Sally Blumenthal-McGannon, LMFT)

### *Support for Grieving Teens*

**Thursday, May 1**

See article on this page for more information.

# ONE WOMAN'S JOURNEY

Continued from page 1

right breast. Surgery was successful, but little did I know my ordeal was just beginning.

My friend Emily, a uterine cancer survivor, told me about WomenCARE, so during the purgatory period between surgery and post-opt treatment, I visited their office. Lynn

Boulé, who was in the office that sunny March afternoon, welcomed me, listened to my story, and told me hers. She pointed out reading material and other resources to me.

As I learned the devastating nature of the upcoming medical procedures, my prospects seemed bleak.

At WomenCARE, I also learned of resources that were available to help stave off the terror I felt about the future. My mind became a sponge. I borrowed tapes, books, pamphlets, and anything else that could turn off the pessimistic track playing inside my brain. I attended drop-in support groups where women shared their stories. They guided and sustained me while I found my way through a labyrinth of fear and paperwork. From one young woman I learned the importance of keeping my "films," of going to my doctor appointments prepared to ask key questions, of recording these sessions, and of going with a companion who would be objective and supportive.

My husband and I met with my oncologist, who would see me through chemotherapy, and I was told I didn't qualify for radiation; it could spread the cancer. I remember, as if it were today, how he rolled away from us on his stool as if to distance himself from the bad

news. He suggested I undergo a mastectomy prior to chemotherapy and he started telling us the possible side effects of the poisons he called a chemo cocktail. I wasn't ready to hear this and ran out of his office shaking like a leaf.

My panic was suffocating me. I called my sister and told her she had to fly with me to Phoenix to see our family's spiritual advisor and nutritionist. Her advice was simple: "No fear, no sugar, and talk to the man upstairs."

That night back in Capitola, I stared at a photograph of Paramahansa Yogananda, founder of the Self Realization Fellowship. I decided right then NOT to have a mastectomy. I realized that the first step in my journey was to anchor my life to a force greater than the chemicals and procedures ahead. All life is sacred and spiritual, so illness, too, is spiritual in nature.

I gave away most of my teaching materials and business clothes and began meditating every morning before dawn. I memorized 40 bible verses and recited them walking barefoot on the beach. I went to healing services at two churches. My friends took me to see Amachi at her ashram in Dublin, California, and I left with the conviction of having received spiritual radiation. I kept a journal and began to take inventory of my life.

I don't want to dwell on the ordeal of chemotherapy treatment, but I did stop short of the usual 6-month course, deciding to switch to alternative medicine. Joan Borysenko put it succinctly when she said, "You are not responsible for your illness, you are responsible to it."

Two years later I was diagnosed with a totally unrelated form of lymphoma. I underwent surgery and radiation rather than chemotherapy. It has now been five years since breast cancer and three since lymphoma. What sustained me through two encounters with cancer?

A meditation group called Sahaj Marg. Attending three, six-month Healing Circles at WomenCARE. The privilege of knowing courageous women like Maddie Zorn, Sally Schwartz, Pat Rutherford, Carol Rogers, Carolyn and Helen Curnow, and other brave women who touched my life. Attending every *Cancer as a Turning Point* conference. Reading books which taught me to monitor the effect of my emotions on my immune system and to accept my life's purpose: to grow in wisdom to learn to love better.

Repeating chants by Bri Maya Tiwari, an Auryvedic monastic, who taught me to honor my ancestors, lest I be doomed to carry them on my back. Chants meant to strengthen Vibration Immunity.

I was privileged to be a founding member and co-facilitator of Entre Nosotras, WomenCARE's support group for Hispanic women. This group serves women in Watsonville who experience cultural and language issues in addition to the other obstacles I have talked about. I also had the opportunity to volunteer in the Peer Navigator Project and help women newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

I want to thank WomenCARE's countless volunteers who gave their all to assist me in my quest to regain my health so I could in turn help those who came behind me.

Namaste.

*They guided and sustained me while I found my way through a labyrinth of fear and paperwork.*

## PEER NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

Continued from page 3

coin) all newly-diagnosed women receive a one-time counseling appointment with a cancer professional, at which time they are given information relating to a variety of services available throughout the community. Women who join our study are assigned to our Peer Navigator intervention or to the comparison group in which women continue with their regular medical care and are able to access all other desired community resources. The only difference between the two groups is whether they are assigned a Peer Navigator. All participants—both Navigators and Sojourners—complete periodic assessments for a year.

Many people have asked us why a randomized clinical trial is necessary, especially given the favorable results of our pilot study. One way to think about this is that although the women matched with Peer Navigators in our pilot study became less distressed, perhaps most newly-diagnosed women would also reduce their distress over that same year even if they did not have a Peer Navigator. As with clinical trials that test new drug therapies, the best way to determine the efficacy of a peer support program is by having a comparison group. To our knowledge, this is the first carefully conducted study of such buddy programs for women with breast cancer.

Information provided by each woman in our clinical trial is crucial for understanding if the program is important for women during the initial diagnosis and treatment phase. It is important for us to understand who benefits from this type of program and whether there are women who may only benefit under certain conditions. For example, we may find that women who have good family support do just as well over time, whether they have this intervention or not, but women who do not have strong family support really benefit from the program. This information will help us understand how to better serve all WomenCARE clients and how to improve the Peer Navigator Program to help women seeking one-on-one support.

The WomenCARE/Stanford Peer Navigator team wholeheartedly thanks all of the women who participated in the pilot program, as well as those who are currently participating in the clinical trial. You are helping our mothers, sisters, daughters, and generations to come. Thank you!

***We continue to enroll women—both Sojourners and Navigators—in the Peer Navigator Clinical Trial. For more information, please call WomenCARE at 457-2273.***



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Continued from page 3

board members are challenged to find other ways to maintain and increase essential services to these underserved women and their families.

An additional funding crisis becomes apparent as we look toward the completion of the clinical trial—in June 2004—which has funded the development of our **Peer Navigator Project**. It will be a high priority to generate the financial backing to continue offering this essential and responsible one-to-one support for newly-diagnosed women.

Also in this newsletter are reports on the generosity of our local community through benefits and other forms of donation. This spring we proudly launch our **new annual fundraiser, Women's Voices** (featured on the front page of this newsletter). We look forward to seeing you there. The support of individuals who have contributed volunteer time, donations, and services is more important now than ever. Please support our hard-working board in their dedication to maintaining WomenCARE's health and well-being.

—Connie Batten

The WomenCARE Newsletter is brought to you through the countless volunteer hours of those listed below. Input, ideas and sponsorship of future issues are welcome and needed. Enjoy!

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# *Fire in My Heart Ice in My Veins*

*Words of your death greeted me like*

*A wave of despair*

*Drowning out a bonfire of hope*

*The fire in my heart gave way*

*To the ice running through my veins*

*Your death caught me from behind,*

*Like cold fingers gripping the back of my neck*

*Forcing my heart to crack*

*Open*

*Your death is the fire that ravages*

*Through the forests*

*Of my soul,*

*Leaving black and grey ashes in its wake.*

*In the shade suddenly drawn down around*

*I will plant memories of you*

*And inhale their sweet smell*

*In the spring.*

*The fire in my heart thawed*

*The ice running through my veins.*

*Life will always follow after death*

*As even the longest, darkest of nights*

*Are followed by the light of day.*

*—David G. Traisman*

# In Memoriam

**SOME PEOPLE COME INTO OUR LIVES AND QUICKLY GO...  
SOME PEOPLE STAY AWHILE AND LEAVE FOOTPRINTS ON OUR HEARTS...  
AND, WE ARE NEVER THE SAME!**



WomenCARE wishes to acknowledge and honor those women who have gone ahead of us this year, yet stay always in our hearts:

Ma. Silvia Casein

Dolores Gonzales

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Mary Halvorson

Catherine Macleod

Lorraine Milner

Pat Palazzo

Guadalupe Solano

Juana Veloz

*Fresh bouquets of exquisite flowers greet our visitors and support group members at the WomenCARE office each week. Many thanks to The Flower Shack for this ongoing donation.*

*“Whatever meaning I make out of suffering, I want it to be one that makes me feel more open to life, not less; more authentic, more loving, and more compassionate. I want it to build, not diminish, my integrity. If the story helps me to do these things, it’s a good story. If it doesn’t, then I must go back and keep walking the old existential ground ‘til another meaningful story emerges.”*

*—from Healing Through the Dark Emotions,  
by Miriam Greenspan*