At VBCF we believe that breast cancer is more than a pink ribbon - it is women and men and families. It is scientists and doctors, legislators and advocates. It is drugs and procedures. This is a battle. There are scars. There are victories and losses. Connecting it all is the pink ribbon.

It’s hard not to think of the pink ribbon when you hear the words breast cancer. Each October the ribbon is everywhere you look. It’s on television, in commercials and the news. It’s at your newsstand, in your gym, in your doctor’s office. It’s at the supermarket, in nearly every aisle.

Love it or hate it, the pink ribbon has become a formidable tool. It prompts people to walk, run, and march. It motivates purchases and donations. We see the pink ribbon as a conversation starter. Thirty years ago, cancer was not discussed, and certainly not breast cancer. When we are out in the community, people will see our pink ribbon and come over to start a conversation - about their diagnosis, or that of a family member or friend.

Support VBCF for a Chance to Win a 2011 Nissan Altima!
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Sometimes they ask about symptoms they may be experiencing.

Each October, VBCF hosts the Pink Ribbon Campaign. We distribute ribbons all over the state - and at VBCF, our ribbons come with education. Each ribbon is attached to a card with information about breast health - in English and Spanish. The cards also give information about the VA Department of Health’s Every Woman’s Life program which provides screening and treatment to the uninsured and underinsured.

We believe the ribbon must lead us all somewhere to a time when breast cancer is gone. Education gives us a voice to call for that action. The word advocate, at its root means voice. VBCF’s mission is to eradicate breast cancer through education and advocacy.

VBCF is the place for anyone who wants to see the end of breast cancer. Please join us as an advocate, an educator or a donor. Lend your voice to the fight.
Wow, talk about a busy summer. My VBCF travels this summer have taken me from Montross to Wise, VA. My title may be President, but sometimes my role is just being a pack mule. And I am happy to lend a hand wherever needed.

VBCF is, to me, a wonderful organization that responsibly uses its resources to make a difference in the fight against breast cancer. Our motto, “EDUCATE. ADVOCATE. ERADICATE.”, sums up our purpose. Fundraising is certainly important to any non-profit. It enables us to pursue our advocacy and educational goals, pay the rent, and hire staff. I wanted to take this time to share with you some of our recent accomplishments.

Educate  

One of our biggest educational outreach programs is Becky’s Place at RAM. Look for more about RAM in this newsletter. This year all our activities at Becky’s Place were in memory of Becky Morris, our dear friend who lost her battle last December. It’s amazing how much impact one person can have in their lifetime and Becky’s reach was international. I was touched that Mrs. Susan Allen (wife of past VA Governor and Senator George Allen) volunteered with us because of her friendship with Becky. All of our volunteers were great, but I must give a shout-out to RAM committee co-chairs Yvonne Eisenberg and Maggie Powers, volunteer coordinator Kathy Boehm, and educational coordinator Mary Saunders.

Another educational outreach is our library program which distributes funds to local library systems so that they can maintain current information regarding breast cancer. With the budget constraints at all government levels, these funds are greatly needed. We will be distributing our first grants for 2011 soon.

Advocate  

Our advocacy commitment is much more than our two lobby days. This summer, Vernal Branch, our advocacy coordinator, testified before the FDA about our position on the role Avastin has in treating metastatic breast cancer. Be sure to read Vernal’s article. We could have taken the easy way out and not taken a position, but that is not VBCF.

Currently, we are asking our Congressional Members and the President to support NBCC’s The Breast Cancer Deadline 2020 initiative (www.breastcancerdeadline.2020). Also, we are watching the FY 2012 budget talks for our request for $150 million (level funding) for the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program. Contact our office to get involved.

ERADICATE  

Our ultimate goal. This year VBCF celebrates its 20th anniversary. Much progress has been made, but I want to be there when we can hang the Gone out of Business sign on our door. We hope to see you November 5 at our 20th Anniversary Reception.

In order to fund these and other efforts, VBCF participated in several fundraising events this summer. You will see more about them in the newsletter, but, please know that our board is grateful to all our financial supporters.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments about VBCF. Email me at president@vbcf.org or call the office at 800-345-8223 and leave a message.
VBCF Supports the FDA Decision to Remove the Breast Cancer Indication from Avastin  Written by
Vernal Branch, Public Policy Director

Early in the morning on June 28, 2011, I was one of 37 people given the opportunity to give a public statement about the drug Avastin. We were only given 3 minutes each. As I listened to those before me, it was clear that my view would be in the minority. The women and men who wanted this drug approved for continued accelerated approval were passionate, and did not care about the evidence from well defined studies.

The clinical trials completed on Avastin were the AVADO, RIBBON 1 and RIBBON 2 trials, and they showed no evidence of increased overall survival. While the trials demonstrated some improvement in progression-free survival, VBCF remains convinced that it is not enough to justify FDA approval for treating metastatic breast cancer. Like many others who care about people affected by breast cancer, VBCF was hopeful that Avastin would prove to be a more effective treatment for metastatic breast cancer than other drugs already on the market. The trials involving Avastin have not yielded a favorable benefit/risk evaluation.

We continue to advocate for drugs to receive FDA approval for improved overall survival, improved quality of life and that are less costly than therapies already available. Avastin does not meet any of these criteria.

There were only a handful of us who advocated on behalf of the FDA. In the end the FDA took away accelerated approval.

Captions: PHOTO 1: VBCF’s dragon boat team flexed their muscles before competing in the 2nd Annual WhatIfCreditUnions.com Dragon Boat Festival. PHOTO 2: Sharon Talarico (third from right), director of the Women’s Memorial Golf Tournament presents a check in the amount of $32,000 to VBCF. This was the 25th Anniversary of the tournament; VBCF has received the proceeds for the last 20 years. PHOTO 3: VBCF Supporters, Board Members & Staff pose at A Night of Honky Tonk Angels. Pictured (l-r) are: Etta Boyd, Barbara Geisler, Gay Rudis, Skye Sinclaire, Vernal Branch, Jennie Southworth, Michelle Wright and Wendy Burtner Owens. PHOTO 4: Members of Typhoon Elite Field Hockey hosted a Score for a Cure Fundraiser in May with part of the proceeds benefitting VBCF.
Wow! In spite of the high humidity and heat index, the wonderful volunteers at Becky’s Place displayed a true team spirit as they worked together for the annual Remote Area Medical (RAM) health outreach at the Wise County fairgrounds. RAM provides free dental, medical, and vision care to rural Southwest Virginia. Care is given to the uninsured, underinsured, unemployed, working poor and others who cannot afford to pay for these services.

Sponsored by the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, Becky’s Place provides cancer education classes during the 2½ day event at RAM. Margaret Borwhat started the program 10 years ago. When Margaret lost her battle with breast cancer, Becky Morris took over the program. Becky lost her battle with metastatic breast cancer this past year and was sadly missed by volunteers, RAM staff and many of the patients whose lives Becky had touched. This year was dedicated to the memory of Becky Morris.

Governor Bob McDonnell, his wife, Maureen, and his sister stopped by to visit on Saturday.

A van loaded with books, school materials, and teacher supplies donated by RAM volunteers delivered its cargo to the Wise County Public School Board building. Donna Bates, Director of Federal Programs, said “As we notified the principals to pick up these materials, we received some wonderful comments. One principal, who was new to the elementary schools, was grateful and very profoundly touched at such generosity.”

Volunteers hear many touching stories over the weekend. For example, a young woman in her 20’s found a lump, went to her doctor and was told not to worry about it. She insisted and used the information that she had learned at Becky’s Place to push for the next step. She had a lumpectomy and is now “being watched.”

A woman in her early 30’s also found a lump during a self breast exam. She went to the Health Department to get a diagnosis. She said what she learned at Becky’s Place “saved her life.”

Co-chairs Yvonne Eisenberg and Maggie Powers wish to thank each volunteer for whatever role they played at Becky’s Place. We also want to thank our generous sponsors. Becky’s Place is a success as a result of all the volunteers making it happen, it takes a team. THANK YOU TEAM!
Highlights from the 2011 ASCO Convention  
written by Meg Shrader, RN, VBCF Vice-President

There were four major highlights concerning breast cancer treatment from the 2011 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) annual meeting held in Chicago: lymph node dissection, Aromasin, Iniparib and clinical trials.

Lymph Node Dissection: Two studies reported that for a select group of early-stage breast cancer patients undergoing lumpectomy with one or two positive sentinel nodes, an axillary lymph node dissection (ALND) did not improve survival but did increase the risk of lymphedema and infection. The presenters cautioned that the results cannot be applied to all breast cancers as the criteria for the study were very specific. This will benefit 20 percent of breast cancer patients (approximately 40,000 per year).

Aromasin (Exemestane): Tamoxifen reduces the risk of either a primary breast cancer or recurrence by up to 50 percent and has been used for decades. Raloxifene (Evista) has recently been used for risk reduction as well. Women at high risk have been reluctant to take Tamoxifen due to its serious side effects, including blood clots, strokes and uterine cancer. Dr. Paul Goss, MD,PhD, recently released his research results showing that Aromasin lowers the relative risk of a primary breast cancer by up to 65 percent and the rate of non-invasive cancers by 53 percent. Aromasin proved to be more effective in terms of risk reduction without the severe side effects.

Iniparib, a PARP inhibitor: Dr. Joyce O'Shaughnessy presented the Phase 3 data which revealed that the goal for both progression free and overall survival in triple negative metastatic patients had not been reached. Upon further analysis results showed that women with one to two prior treatments for advanced breast cancer had an increase in both progression free and overall survival on Iniparib while those that were newly diagnosed did not. Sanofi-Aventis has committed to a clinical trial to verify these results.

Clinical trials in breast cancer are complicated by the 4 molecular subtypes, declining numbers of participants, and the availability of clinical trials in community cancer centers. The traditional approach is being questioned as we have smaller numbers of eligible patients in some of the subtypes and trials closing early for lack of accrual. Look for discussions regarding decreasing the numbers of large trials in favor of multiple smaller trials designed by molecular subtype.

You may qualify for a free mammogram and pap test through the Every Woman's Life Program. 
Call to see if you qualify!
Volunteer Spotlight: Lydia Stewart

Lydia Stewart was looking forward to celebrating her husband’s retirement from the United States Air Force and her daughter’s graduation from high school. That changed on January 15th, 2008. With no family history, she was diagnosed with Stage 1 Breast Cancer.

Stewart was born in Birmingham, Alabama. The fifth of six children by a Baptist Minister and a Head Start teacher, she met her husband while attending the University of Alabama. Several military assignments and three children later, the family moved to Woodbridge, VA in June of 1999. Active in church, Stewart was a member of the Deaconess and the Music Ministry. While she majored in Broadcasting with a Masters in Telecommunications, a job that she held in North Dakota led her to her true love, teaching students with Special Needs. She completed her Masters in Special Education in 2005.

Two days after her birthday, Stewart underwent surgery. One month later, she started chemotherapy. She also received Herceptin because her breast cancer was HER2-positive, a breast cancer that tests positive for a protein called human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2).

Family and friends advised her to step back from her responsibilities to focus on her healing. She hadn’t realized that one of the side effects of cancer would be to stop doing the things she loved. She prayed and turned everything over to God. With the support and prayers of her family, friends, coworkers and church, she completed her treatments, took care of her family and continued her work for her school and church.

Stewart joined VBCF when Brenda Bryant, the mother of one of her daughter’s friends, asked to speak at her church. Bryant, also a survivor, asked for her help to start a chapter in Prince William County. The following October the VBCF Prince William County Chapter was formed.

While the treatments have ended, Stewart continues to work as an advocate. She stays busy educating others as the Prince William County Chapter President, as well as attending Lobby Days.

Stewart’s advice to those diagnosed is this: A diagnosis is not an excuse to stop living. It means to start fighting.

Blue Ridge Chapter

The chapter is thrilled to be receiving a portion of the proceeds from the Greater Augusta Association of Realtors Mystery Dinner Theatre on Friday, September 30 at Barren Ridge Vineyards in Fishersville. The evening starts at 6:30pm and includes a buffet and a complimentary glass of wine. There will be a cash wine and beer bar. The winner receives a one night stay and breakfast compliments of the Stonewall Jackson Hotel. Tickets are $35 per person. To purchase tickets call: 540-886-0145 or 540-943-4500 or contact Yvonne Eisenberg at 540-943-6423 or 540-294-3743. Make checks payable to GAAR.

Central VA Chapter

The Central Virginia Chapter has been busy this summer! Volunteers participated in health fairs, speaking engagements, and many other activities, including the Honky Tonk Angels Benefit and the Dragon Boat Festival. They will host a wonderful speaker at their September 8 meeting. Beth Edwards, a Lymphedema Therapist, will speak on Kiniseo Tape. The chapter is also hard at work on this year’s library program and will soon be visiting library systems throughout Central Virginia to make donations towards the purchase of breast cancer materials.

Save the date for some delicious food and fun at the chapter’s annual Breast Cancer Awareness Dinner on Monday, October 24! Local celebrity waiters will serve you a wonderful meal while you support the cause. Visit www.vbcf.org for more information.

Hampton Roads Chapter

Join the Hampton Roads Chapter for their 9th Annual Rolling for Life Motorcycle Ride on Saturday, October 1. Registration will begin at 9:00am at Aggressor Custom Cycles in Portsmouth. This year’s ride will go from Portsmouth to the Franklin Fall Festival in Franklin, VA. Cost is $10. Contact Duke Garner at 757-714-7910 or at sirduke04@cox.net for more information.

The Chapter will also host their Annual Breast Cancer Luncheon on Saturday, November 12. Look for more details coming soon at www.vbcf.org.

Visit www.vbcf.org to download the Breast Cancer Awareness Month Calendar. No internet? Call 1-800-345-VBCF to request a copy!
Peninsula Chapter

The Peninsula Chapter will host their 17th Annual VBCF Golf Tournament on Saturday, October 8. This year’s tournament will take place at Kiln Creek Golf Club and Resort in Newport News. Check-in/Registration will begin at 11:00am with Shotgun Start at 1:00pm. The Driving Range will be open from 11:00am-12:00pm. The tournament is Captain’s Choice. Mulligans and “Turtles” will be sold on the day of the tournament. Dinner and silent auction will follow the tournament. Take the opportunity to get some early holiday shopping done! MC, Visa, cash, and checks are accepted. Entry fees are $75 per person or $300 for a team of four. Sponsorship opportunities are available! For information, contact Ann Wilson at 757-380-8500 or Bodina Wright at 757-868-6280.

Prince William Chapter

The Prince William Chapter provided breast cancer information at two recent events: the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Free Health Fair held at Ebenezer Baptist Church and the 21st Annual Manassas African-American Heritage Festival. Lydia Stewart, Chapter President, also spoke at the Festival.

The chapter will partner once again with Macy’s Department Store in Manassas Mall for Shop for the Cause on August 27. This nationwide event allows local charities to sell shopping passes to be used by shoppers on that day. The Chapter will host a VBCF literature table in the store on August 27. They will be selling tickets before the event as well as within the store that day.

The Prince William County Chapter is excited to be one of a select group of local organizations which will benefit from Potomac Mills Role Models event on Saturday, October 29. This ticketed event will include a fashion show, a special Role Models awards presentation, swag bags, exclusive shopping offers, refreshments and more! Come join in the fun! The chapter receives 100% of the proceeds from the event tickets that they sell. Check out www.vbcf.org or call 800-345-8223 for more information.

Meet Our Scientific Advisors

James V. Pellicane, M.D., F.A.C.S.

Dr. Pellicane received his undergraduate degree from The Johns Hopkins University and his medical degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. He completed his General Surgery residency at the Medical College of Virginia and is board certified by the American Board of Surgery. He is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons and is an active member of The American Society of Breast Surgeons. He serves on the faculty of several breast care companies where he is able to work through industry to continue to improve and deliver high quality breast care to patients throughout Central Virginia. Dr. Pellicane has served as Chief of Staff and Chief of Surgery at St. Francis Medical Center and currently is the Director of Breast Oncology at the Bon Secours Cancer Institute.

Nadia P. Blanchet, M.D.

Dr. Blanchet has been recognized for her work with women whom have been diagnosed with breast cancer. She was voted Richmond’s Best Plastic Surgeon by Richmond Magazine twelve times - starting in 1999, and most recently 2010. She has also received the First Humanitarian Award from CJW Medical Center, and is participating on the Breast Cancer Leadership Committee at CJW Hospital. Dr. Blanchet believes in the spirit of giving back and supports the World Pediatrics Project, International Hospital for Children, and The Virginia Community Foundation W.J. Blanchet Memorial $5,000 annual scholarship. Several times a year Dr. Blanchet travels to donate her services to the World Pediatric Project. She is board certified by the American College of Surgeons, and the American Board of Plastic Surgery. Dr. Blanchet received a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Mount Holyoke College, Medical Doctorate – New York University School of Medicine, General Surgery – Medical College of Virginia, and Plastic Surgery – University of Pennsylvania.

Want to receive the VBCF Connection, our monthly e-newlsetter? Visit www.vbcf.org to sign up!
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or In Honor Of: ____________________________________________
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This newsletter, published by the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, focuses on breast cancer issues and the activities of VBCF supporters. If you have any comments, please call 800-345-VBCF or write to: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, 5004 Monument Avenue, Suite 102, Henrico, VA 23230.