Stepping Beyond Breast Cancer – A Participant’s Point of View
Norma J Watson, Conference Participant


Musa Mayer, renowned author, advocate, teacher, and nineteen year breast cancer survivor, reviewed with the packed house of 120 attendees the varying steps breast cancer survivors must journey from detection, initial diagnosis and treatment, through decision making even twenty years afterwards. She caringly shared the turmoil that comes with follow-up visits, anxiety, recurrence fears, tumor marker testings, depression, and feelings that life as it was before “THE CANCER” would NEVER be again.

"it won’t be!" she strongly stated. But it can be ‘less bad’ because with every check-up and every passing year recurrence rates drop through new treatments, earlier diagnosis, and better care. The "C" word changes from "THE CANCER" to "MY CURE" with HOPE increasing and depression decreasing.

Ms. Mayer told how to address those seeming "distant" years by rethinking your relationship with the "cancer you used to have." She further encouraged survivors to work toward a shift in philosophy through expressive writing, other hobbies, helping new and other cancer patients, prudent self-awareness and check-ups on ANY realistic new body changes. Her detailed answers to audience questions left ALL with renewed HOPE that life after CANCER could be OKAY. YOU have to CHOOSE it!

Gina Bright, RN, PhD, OCN very capably chaired one of the afternoon’s workshops: After the Treatment Phase: Intimacy and other Psychosocial Issues for Breast Cancer Survivors. Her work with patients dealing with the struggles that stem from the varying emotional and social issues breast cancer and other types of cancer patients face was shared. Answers to audience questions gave even more understanding of and dealing with the specific personal problems that all cancers bring.

Patricia Smith, a bar member of Virginia, DC, and Maryland, and Craig J. Curwood of James B. Thorsen PC and Associates of Richmond, VA co chaired the Navigating Insurance and Employment Issues workshop. Both gave insight to the complex legalities of dealing with 'wrongdoing' and 'inappropriate handling' by employers and insurance companies of the rights of employees with health problems.

Attendees left the conference with greater understanding and sources for support for after ‘THE CANCER’ issues. So: Go Forth! Spread the Word! EDUCATE! ADVOCATE! ERADICATE! Our enemies: BREAST CANCER!

Much appreciation goes to VBCF, Sentara Health System, and those who labored so hard to give us such a timely conference. Thank you!
It is late October as I write this column. Breast Cancer Awareness Month is drawing to an end. The month has flown by with many awareness and educational events. Unfortunately, breast cancer doesn't care which month it is. Folks are diagnosed every day and we don't yet have the answers on the causes or a cure or real prevention.

It is about one week prior to the November election. I hope that you exercised your right to VOTE. I respect your decision on which candidates received your vote. Now, we must all work together to hold our new President and all of our elected officials accountable. Our 2009 lobby days are already scheduled; Thursday, February 5 will be our state lobby day and Tuesday, May 5 will be our national lobby day. Mark your calendars now to join us.

Our library project, which is highlighted in this issue, continues to grow. This project was started by our Central Virginia Chapter. Now all of our chapters and our state organization have adopted this program. The library systems have better purchasing pricing when ordering books so we present them a check along with a list of recommended materials to purchase. With government funds being reduced, it is just one small way that we can ensure Virginians have access to up-to-date information about breast cancer.

The October 11 program, Stepping Beyond Breast Cancer, was a wonderful event. Our featured speaker, Musa Mayer, was great. She really addressed the concerns about what happens when your breast cancer primary treatment ends and you are in that “wait and watch mode.” Our two workshops, After the Treatment Phase: Intimacy and Other Psychosocial Issues for Breast Cancer Survivors by Gina Bright, RN, PhD, OCN and Navigating Insurance and Employment Issues presented by Craig Curwood and Pat Smith were very informative. I attended the workshop on insurance and employment issues. Even with two breast cancer diagnoses and over 30 years in management, I learned things that I did not know.

Of course, for me, the most touching part of that day was the presentation of our two annual awards. The Sherry L. Kohlenberg Award is named to honor the memory of Sherry who was one of our original co-founders. It is presented to a medical professional who has gone “above and beyond” in their breast cancer efforts. Meg Shramer was presented this award by Patti Goodall, also one of our co-founders. In addition to being a medical professional, Meg is a breast cancer survivor and president of our Blue Ridge Chapter. The Dopp award recognizes our volunteer of the year. It honors Nancy Dopp. Karin Nos, our immediate past president, was the winner of this award. Of course, Karin’s breast cancer took her away from us in February, 2008 so her husband John accepted the award. Nancy’s children, Melissa and Jeff Dopp, along with Frank Poynter presented the award.

As 2008 draws to a close, I want to thank everyone that has supported VBCF in any way this year. Your time, talents, and financial support keep our organization going. I am grateful to all of our chapters who keep their communities involved and educated about breast cancer. Thanks also to our three paid staff members; all of them do a wonderful job. And, I could not be successful as President without the support of our Board of Directors and committees.

May your 2009 be filled with love, peace, joy, and HEALTH!

Gay Rudis, President
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This newsletter, published by the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, focuses on breast cancer issues and the activities of VBCF.

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If you wish to join VBCF or have any editorial comments please call 1-800-345-8223 or write to: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, 5004 Monument Avenue, Suite 102, Richmond, VA 23220.
VBCF Volunteer Chosen as First Ms Wheelchair USA

Beryl Holzbach, VBCF Central Virginia Chapter Member

"And the first ever title of Ms. Wheelchair USA is presented to…. Beryl Holzbach, Ms. Wheelchair Virginia!" Imagine my surprise and delight as I heard these words uttered.

Last May, upon urging from a family member who had read about it in the newspaper, I applied for the title of Ms. Wheelchair Virginia. The winner of that title would go on to compete in the Ms. Wheelchair USA competition.

A platform statement was required as part of the application process. I chose “Breast Health Education and Advocacy for Women with Disabilities” as my platform. Being a wheelchair user, breast cancer survivor, and VBCF member I feel uniquely qualified to address this topic.

In reminiscing about my own breast cancer diagnosis and treatment I was thankful that I had the education and support to guide me through the experience. However, there are many disabled women who do not have these resources. A few questions come to mind.

- While there are currently questions surrounding the efficacy of BSE, we can agree that knowing ones own body is the first step to knowing when something is not right. Question, how does a woman with limited use of her arms perform a breast self exam?

- How does a disabled woman find an accredited mammography site that is wheelchair accessible?

- How does a woman who uses her upper body for mobility cope with the loss of strength in her arms resulting from surgery and possible side effects such as lymphedema?

- How does a woman who may already have a low body self image due to a disability cope with the loss of hair and other side effects of chemotherapy?

- Regarding radiation therapy how does a woman with a severe scoliosis or other type of skeletal issue that may prohibit her from comfortably laying on her back, get the treatment she needs without experiencing pain?

Additionally many women with disabilities may not have access to routine breast health resources (i.e. yearly visits to the gynecologist, information on breast self exam, routine mammography screenings). Research has shown that women with physical disabilities tend to have mammograms less often than women without disabilities. The most common reason cited for this is lack of accessible screening facilities.

I am interested in developing and implementing programs that will educate disabled women on breast health issues, advocate for improved accessibility to diagnostic screenings for the disabled population, and instruct the medical community on how to interact with people who have disabilities.

I am excited about this opportunity and am looking forward to representing not only the Ms.Wheelchair USA organization but the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation as Ms.Wheelchair USA 2008!
Volunteer Spotlight: Yvonne Eisenberg

Yvonne Eisenberg was diagnosed with infiltrating ductal breast cancer November, 1999. She can remember taking a shower on a Thursday evening and finding an enlarged lymph node under her left arm. She received the sandwich treatment; chemotherapy-surgery-chemotherapy, radiation, tamoxifen and she has one more year of femara. Yvonne admits to feeling a little uptight at times when she thinks of not being on any treatment soon.

Yvonne became involved with VBCF through Myrtle Kite when the Blue Ridge Chapter was newly formed. They were both serving as committee person with their local Relay for Life event in Augusta County. Myrtle explained to Yvonne what VBCF represented and it sounded like an organization she would be proud to be associated with. Yvonne says that being associated with VBCF has enriched her life in so many ways and just being surrounded by so many more positive and focused friends has strengthened her in her journey. She is also involved with the National Breast Cancer Coalition, Women's Cancer Advocacy Network, the American Cancer Society Relay for Life and the Reach to Recovery programs, and she helps with Camp Dragonfly which is a weekend camp for grieving children sponsored by her local Hospice organization. She has also graduated from the Quality Care Project Lead and Project Lead Institute in Denver, Colorado.

Yvonne works as a registered nurse in the operating room, does anesthesia billing, and presently attends Eastern Mennonite University to obtain her BS degree. Yvonne’s mother died at the age of 51 from endometrial cancer when she was 16 years old. It was dealing with her mother’s illness at an early age in her life that inspired Yvonne to become a nurse. In her spare time she participates in teaching about breast cancer in health fairs, churches, schools, civic organizations and on an individual basis. She is focused on improving breast cancer awareness through education and support, especially the poor and underserved populations. Of all of this, her favorite job is being a grandmother to 7 wonderful grandchildren, mother of 2 sons and 1 daughter, wife, and friend.

Yvonne told us that “Life’s journey leads us down many different paths. Those paths have led us to where we are today and they will give us hope and faith to where we want to be tomorrow.” Though Yvonne would not have chosen breast cancer for her journey, we are thankful for the path it has led her on as she works to educate and advocate as we work to eradicate breast cancer.

Blue Ridge Chapter

The Blue Ridge Chapter has stayed busy this fall. They received proclamations for October being breast cancer awareness month from the City Councils of Staunton and Waynesboro as well as the Augusta County Board of Supervisors. Chapter members were well received at each meeting.

The chapter participated in Colonial Mall’s “In the Pink” by providing breast cancer information and handouts at the mall kiosk as well as pink ribbons to the merchants that requested them. The chapter had a VBCF table at Famous Labels store “Spa Day.” They have participated in several resource and health fairs in the area, including the Staunton, Augusta, Waynesboro Chamber of Commerce Resource Fair and JMU’s Employee Health Fair. Breast cancer education programs were presented to the 9th graders at Riverheads High School, as well as various churches, apartments, and other locations in the area.

Central Virginia Chapter

15th Annual Jazzercise Dance for the Cause

Breast cancer survivors at the Jazzercise “Dance for the Cause” northside event are honored with pink roses. Pictured (L-R) Gay Rudis, Sandra Perschetz, Joanne Shaw, Windy Schatzle, Glo Barnes, Carol Snyder, Barbara Franz and Barbara Geisler.

The Central Virginia Chapter hosted the 15th annual Jazzercise “Dance for the Cause” at two locations this year. Glo Barnes, a twenty-two year breast cancer survivor and Jazzercise Instructor, started this event in 1994 to benefit VBCF. After the Central Virginia chapter was formed, they began assisting Glo. In the past 15 years, “Dance For the Cause” has generated over $135,000 in donations.

This year’s first event was held at Saturday, September 27, at Wistar Jazzercise Center, near Brander Mill. Jazzercise instructor Heather Shields led the dance routines, aided by Isabel Strum. Carol Divers was the Central Virginia Chapter coordinator.

The second event was held Sunday, October 26, at the Weinstein
Jewish Community Center. The Weinstein JCC donated their space for the event. Glo Barnes hosted this event and was aided by other local Jazzercise instructors including Barbara Franz, Vickie Black-Vigue, Sherrela Brown, and Dawn Shrull.

Between the two locations, there were 58 participants including VBCF volunteers. The Central Virginia Chapter would like to thank all of those who participated, including the businesses and individuals that donated prizes to the raffle, to make the 2008 event successful.

12th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Dinner

The Central Virginia Chapter’s 12th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Dinner was an overwhelming success, raising over $21,000 through donations and sponsorships. Participants enjoyed a delicious dinner served by area celebrities at the Brickhouse Run restaurant in Old Towne, Petersburg.

Library Outreach Program

Pictured (l-r) Evelyn Cooley & Kathy Funk with Petersburg Librarian Wayne Cracker in front of the books & display of the literature purchased with the chapter donation.

The Central Virginia Chapter's Library Outreach Program has wrapped up for the 2008 year. All together, the chapter donated $4000 to eight library systems and two hospital libraries in the Central Virginia area.

Hampton Roads Chapter

2nd Annual Victory Walk

Miss Suffolk, Miss Norfolk, Miss Southeastern Virginia and Miss Virginia All American pose with Hampton Roads Chapter President Eunice McMillan at the Victory Walk.

The Hampton Roads Chapter held is 2nd Annual Victory Walk on September 20 with over 50 people participating. This two mile walk is held in collaboration with the City of Portsmouth and the UMOJA Festival, and winds along the waterfront. The walk is a wonderful breast cancer awareness tool as well as being a fundraiser.

6th Annual Rolling for Life Motorcycle Ride

With the support of their partners, Thunder & Lightning Motorcycle Club, Hampton Roads Chapter's 6th annual motorcycle ride, "Rolling for Life", indeed kicked off Breast Cancer Awareness Month with a roar. Petersburg, Virginia was the destination and this year chapter members joined the community in their annual Nostalgia Fest. The escorted ride, with sirens blasting and lights flashing, along with the parade of beautiful bikes and colorfully clad bikers gained festival goers attention and the chapter followed up with a tabling event distributing literature and talking to festival participants.

VBCF Hampton Roads Annual Luncheon

Fashion Elegante, a senior modeling club funded by Newport News Parks, Recreation and Tourism, was again the highlight of Hampton Roads annual luncheon. Back by popular demand, eight models, ranging in age from 60-80, strutted their stuff in both contemporary and vintage styles.

Jeanette "Nettie" Wright lost her battle with breast cancer in April
Hampton Roads Chapter - Continued

Annual Luncheon - Con't from page 5

2007. On Saturday, November 8, 2008, the Hampton Roads Chapter dedicated its luncheon to the memory of Jeanette Wright, with daughter Wanda Wright, several family members and friends on hand to witness the occasion. Given her strong faith and positive attitude, Ms. Wright survived two years longer than predicted when diagnosed with stage IV breast cancer.

Lucy Overton’s family again showed their support by purchasing a table for the fifth annual presentation of the Overton Award. The award is presented annually to a person or entity whose support made a significant difference to the Chapter in its mission to educate and advocate for issues around breast cancer. Wal-Mart was the recipient of the 2008 Overton Award. Rolandus “Duke” Garner was honored as the Chapter’s Volunteer of the year and Tracy Donato was presented the “Twining” Award for her unselfish effort in donating almost $1500 collected from colleagues at work over the past three years.

New on this year’s program was a live auction. The bidding was spirited as participants waved their napkins to bid. A post election day special edition of the Washington Post was the most sought after item.

Overton Award 2008 – Wal-Mart

Lucy Overton was both a well-known and dominate force in the community and influenced many of the political decisions that shaped Portsmouth for many years. Few knew, at her death in 2004, that she was also a 30 year breast cancer survivor. Lucy Overton was the honoree at the Hampton Roads first annual luncheon in 2003. The chapter presented its first Overton Award in 2004.

The 2008 Overton Award was presented to Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. for their community support of the activites of the Hampton Roads chapter of VBCF. Wal-Mart's philosophy is to operate globally and give back locally. The Hampton Roads Chapter is a beneficiary of that philosophy.

Until this year, the chapter operated on a shoe string. Chapter activities were supported by merchandise sales and members’ donations. Thanks to community grants, totaling $3790, from four Wal-Marts in Norfolk, Chesapeake, Suffolk and Virginia Beach, the Hampton Roads Chapter now operates “in style” and more efficiently. Because of Wal-Mart’s generosity, the chapter was able to purchase a Toshiba laptop computer, an all in one printer, copier, fax machine and scanner for office activity. As a result of their generous community grant, the chapter purchased their own megaphone, with a 1/4 mile radius, to use during outdoor activities, including the motorcycle ride and walk. In addition, route signs and t-shirts for the Victory Walk were purchased and the chapter was able to recognize each of the forty volunteers with a “walk” pin.

The Hampton Roads Chapter of VBCF has benefited greatly from Wal-Mart’s support in its fight against breast cancer.

Willie Cheeks accepted the award for Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. Mr. Cheeks is Regional Marketing Manager for Electronic Merchandise in the Hampton Roads area.

Peninsula Chapter

Chapter Keeps Busy in October!

Peninsula Chapter VBCF members preparing for lunch and activities after the Oct. 4 golf tournament: (pictured l-r): Nancy Hopkins, Bodina Wright, Joanne Ward, Sally Taylor, Jeannie Harrell, Diane Belharz, Linda Poppie, and Donna Rutter.

The Fourteenth Annual Golf tournament was held at The Woodlands on October 4 and 80 golfers and approximately 20 volunteers enjoyed beautiful weather and a nice chicken “picnic” lunch. This event netted the Chapter about $9,000!

Members have placed Pink Ribbons at many medical offices, hospitals, restaurants, beauty salons and other businesses on the
Peninsula. Over 5,000 ribbons have been distributed by the chapter this October.

Many educational events have been held during the month of October including the Ivy Baptist Church Women’s Health Fair, Pinecroft Retirement Community Health Fair and the Chesapeake Retirement Community Health Fair in Newport News. Pink ribbons were distributed to students and faculty at Grafton High School’s “Think Pink Day” on October 16. Chapter members were also on hand to provide information to approximately 175 women at “Girls Night Out” at Mary Immaculate Hospital.

On October 22, Ann Wilson presented the VBCF Stay Abreast presentation at the Kraft Foods Plant in Suffolk, and provided educational information to approximately 100 employees during their lunch hour. Kraft Foods has supported the Peninsula Chapter for several years at their annual golf tournament by donating packages of peanuts for the golfers’ goody bags.

VBCF Presents Genetics of Breast Cancer Program in Warsaw

The VBCF Outreach Program traveled to Warsaw, Virginia recently to present a program on the Genetics of Breast Cancer to nearly 20 participants. VBCF volunteer Kelly Tracy, PhD of Human Genetics, provided the group an easily understood overview of the relationship between breast cancer, genetics and genetic testing. Following her presentation, Kelly entertained questions from participants. Gay Rudis, VBCF Board President, also answered some questions regarding VBCF and advocacy. Participants were able to further discuss the topic with Kelly and ask questions of Gay during the refreshment time that followed. Many thanks to the Bosom Buddies Breast Cancer Support Group in Warsaw for the delicious refreshments and for helping to organize this event.
Save the Date!

State Lobby Day

Save the date for VBCF's State Lobby Day – Thursday, February 5 – in Richmond, VA. Advocates will break into teams to visit our Delegates and Senators and lobby for important legislative issues related to breast cancer. Your voice matters!

If there is enough interest we will charter a bus to bring participants from the Tidewater and Western Virginia areas. Contact VBCF at (800) 345-8223 or email Lisa@vbcf.org to sign up today.

National Lobby Day and Annual Advocacy Conference

Save the date for VBCF's National Lobby Day – Tuesday, May 5 – in Washington D.C. VBCF will charter a bus from Hampton Roads to Yorktown to Richmond to Washington, D.C. where advocates will break into teams to visit our Representatives and Senators and lobby for important national legislative issues related to breast cancer. If there is enough interest transportation will also be coordinated from the Blue Ridge area. Your participation matters! Contact VBCF at (800) 345-8223 or email Lisa@vbcf.org to sign up today.

In addition to National Lobby Day, the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) will present the Annual Advocacy Conference in Arlington from Saturday, May 2 to May 5. Join hundreds of breast cancer advocates and learn the latest about breast cancer science, research and public policy. Find out how to become an effective activist in the fight to end breast cancer and finish up the conference by attending the National Lobby Day with VBCF. To register for NBCC's Annual Advocacy Conference, contact NBCC at (800) 622-2838 or visit www.stopbreastcancer.org. VBCF offers sponsorship for volunteers to attend this conference, which reimburses up to 2/3 the cost of hotel and transportation for approved applicants. For more information and to request a sponsorship application, contact VBCF.

Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act

The following is a statement issued by Fran Visco, President of the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC). VBCF serves on the board of NBCC. The Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act is a piece of legislation we have advocated for on National Lobby Day and through other means.

After nearly a decade of fighting to pass the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act, the National Breast Cancer Coalition is disappointed that the version of the bill that passed both the House and Senate is not the bill that had the support of NBCC, or of 287 Members of Congress and 70 Senators. We greatly appreciate the time and efforts of those who have worked for so many years to pass legislation that would create an innovative approach to examining the links between breast cancer and the environment. The bill that ultimately was enacted into law, does not accomplish the goals set out by the NBCC-supported legislation. The bill that was enacted does not create the grant program or structure that would produce a coherent, national strategy to address the possible links between breast cancer and the environment. It does not focus solely on breast cancer and the environment. While it may be a small step toward some type of reform, it ultimately misses an opportunity to create an innovative model at NIH that could potentially lead to the answers we so desperately need.

Since the original bill was introduced, almost 2 million women have been diagnosed with breast cancer and close to 300,000 have died. We still do not know what causes breast cancer, how to prevent it or how to treat it effectively or cure it. Because of this impact on women and their families, the National Breast Cancer Coalition is committed to do whatever it takes to eradicate breast cancer as soon as possible. Now that the President has signed this version of the bill into law, NBCC will determine how best to use it as a tool to help achieve the goals of the NBCC-supported version of the bill.

Since its inception, the National Breast Cancer Coalition has been fighting to change the systems of breast cancer research to cultivate and nurture innovation, inspire new thinking and new investigators, and encourage multi-disciplinary collaborations. NBCC believes that if the status quo remains in place at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Cancer Institute (NCI), we will never eradicate breast cancer. The system we proposed would have changed that status quo, using as a model proven, innovative approaches to the allocation of scientific resources. The NBCC-supported Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act took that successful model and applied it to the vital and difficult question of what about our environment causes breast cancer. The legislation would have supported a new research model that would ensure that public funds were spent responsibly and strategically, moving away from the isolated research approaches followed over the past many years. The bill described an approach and grant program that had been successful elsewhere, and that
would likely get answers to these critical questions in a timely, scientifically valid way. Finally, the bill was intended to demonstrate to the scientific community at NIH the importance and success of models that include trained, educated advocates at all levels of decision-making.

The bill went through many years of negotiations. Most recently, as negotiated with NIH and passed by the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, the bill maintained its original intent as described above to establish a grant program that would result in a strategic, national approach to studying the potential links between the environment and breast cancer. It would have brought to the NIH a different – and proven – way of doing things and of responsibly spending taxpayer dollars. NBCC supported the HELP-passed version of the bill.

The National Breast Cancer Coalition and its hundreds of member organizations and tens of thousands of individual members are not alone in advocating for changes at NIH. Billions of dollars have been spent at NIH on cancer research and yet, progress in fighting the disease has been incremental. Recent articles in Newsweek and Time highlight the need for creative, innovative, new approaches: “There is no more common refrain among critics of how the war on cancer has been waged: that innovative ideas, ideas that might be grand slams but carry the risk of striking out, are rejected by NCI in favor of projects that promise singles.” (Newsweek, Sept. 8, 2008, Sharon Begley)

We need answers, and it is clear that the crown jewel of our nation’s biomedical research system needs some polishing – and maybe even a new setting – in order to get them. Trying new ideas is sometimes risky – they don’t always work. But, what also hasn’t worked is business as usual. The approach set forth in the NBCC-supported Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act would have been a step toward a new direction at NIH. Unfortunately, it appears that key members of Congress view NIH as sacrosanct. The public has little knowledge of where NIH funding goes, and not for want of trying to find out. The mechanisms for research have been static. NIH needs to be more open to innovation and the NBCC-supported bill would have been a small step toward introducing a proven research model, and a new way of thinking at NIH.

We had thought that a bill with 287 bipartisan House cosponsors and 70 Senate cosponsors and with both sides of the aisle publicly praising the Senate HELP-passed version, could have resulted in an agreement that maintained the core principles of that legislation. We will do all we can to ensure that the legislation that Congress ultimately passed will be a tool to help achieve the original legislative goals, to answer the critical questions about the environmental affect on breast cancer and to bring about needed change at NIH. We at the National Breast Cancer Coalition, whose mission is to eradicate breast cancer and save women’s lives, will continue our work to ensure that policymakers in Congress and at the NIH use their power to answer these questions rapidly. We will monitor, participate, agitate and publicize how the law that passed is being implemented, and what steps are needed to achieve our goals and we will continue to hold policymakers in Congress and at the NIH accountable.

Learn How to Be an Effective Advocate for Breast Cancer

Join us for a regional training in your area.

9:00 – 9:15 Registration

9:15 – 12:30 Advocacy Training
Gain basic information related to effective breast cancer advocacy as well as learning about this year's proposed legislation and issues that will be included in the 2009 Lobbying Days.

12:30 – 1:00 Lunch Provided

1:00 – 1:30 VBCF Volunteer Orientation
Acquire basic information to equip you for working at such events as literature tables, health fairs, and community events.

1:30 – 2:30 Stay Abreast Speaker’s Bureau Training
Learn how to use the VBCF Speaker’s Bureau program to give presentations to groups and organizations.

Richmond area:
January 10, 2009: Tuckahoe Public Library, Henrico.

Tidewater/ Hampton Roads area:
January 17, 2009: Radisson Hotel Norfolk, Downtown Norfolk

Staunton/ Blue Ridge area:
January 17, 2009: Valley Community Services Board, Staunton

Northern Virginia area:
January 17, 2009: TBA

Register on-line at www.vbcf.org or by calling the office.
Attending the Project LEAD scientific training course was an awesome experience. This course is designed to prepare breast cancer advocates to become better equipped to be involved in local and national breast cancer issues and decisions. Participating in this type of scientific training and obtaining an understanding of the language and concepts of the science of breast cancer gives one the knowledge to address issues from a consumer's point of view. Learning how to use critical thinking to interpret the scientific literature that is published is difficult to wrap your brain around but it is necessary to understand how to read a scientific article in order to decide if it was a good study supported by the evidence presented. Evidence based is what it is all about and scientific knowledge that is evidence based strengthens and empowers one as a breast cancer activist.

There was an overwhelming amount of information given to us during this course in the one week stay in Denver. We studied cancer biology, principals of genetics, structure and function of DNA and RNA, epigenetics in breast cancer, epidemiology, research design, breast cancer subtypes, clinical staging of breast cancer, development of cancer at the molecular level and much more. All this information will help us with leadership and advocacy skills enabling our ability, judgment, and resources needed to succeed in the scientific community as well as our own community.

NBCC has fine tuned this course so much that it really gives an enormous amount of information in a short period of time. The mentoring program, scientists, physicians, NBCC staff, and hotel staff all did a superb job. We were fortunate during this course to have an opportunity to visit a research lab and learn about DNA and it was a great opportunity for asking questions about the newest research being performed now. I am so grateful to have been one of the few chosen for the opportunity for this wonderful learning experience. I hope to continue enhancing my knowledge base on breast cancer and advocacy work.

How would I describe my experience at Project LEAD Institute? Long days, lots of food, and it made me wake up and use some of my dormant brain cells. I concur with all the remarks in Yvonne’s article. This was the largest single class ever with over 50 participants. The National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) staff, the instructors, and mentors were well prepared to deal with a group that had a wide range of experience and knowledge about breast cancer and science upon entering the program. They were able to bring very complex scientific material down to our level of understanding. After each lecture session, we split into study groups with a faculty member and a mentor to do an exercise based on what we had just learned. This was very helpful for me.

The sessions on how clinical trials are conducted including participant selection criteria were very interesting. It made me better understand why our breast cancer treatment choices are not as targeted to the individual as I would like, but they are getting better. I will also never read or listen to the results of a scientific study the same way again as Project LEAD showed me how to use my critical thinking skills to analyze them.

Project LEAD has been an ongoing program of NBCC for many years. There is no fee for the class, participants pay for their travel and lodging. And, it does not end with the conclusion of the class. There is a web site for Project LEAD graduates only where much discussion takes place. Also, they offer webinars to graduates and special sessions at the NBCC Annual Advocacy conference so that graduates can continue to grow and keep their knowledge current. And, our mentors are available to help answer questions.

As part of the program, each participant completes an action plan. Part of the commitment of attending is that you will put this new knowledge to work. I now feel prepared to participate in projects, such as a medical institution internal review board (IRB) and reviewing research grants for potential funding.

NBCC also offers other Project LEAD Courses; one on Quality Care and one on Clinical Trials. Project LEAD Institute (also known as Basic Project LEAD) is only offered once per year and they always receive more applications than there are available slots. All Project LEAD courses are eligible for the VBCF sponsorship program that provides for 2/3 of your travel and lodging expenses. Many of our VBCF members are graduates of this program. If you are interested in or have questions about Project LEAD let us know and we can connect you to someone who has completed the course.
VBCF Immediate Past President Karin Decker Noss Awarded Nancy Dopp Volunteer of the Year Award

In 1992 the VBCF Board of Directors established the Nancy Dopp Volunteer of the Year Award to recognize an outstanding volunteer who has contributed time, talent and passion to our organization. The award is given in memory of Nancy Dopp, a VBCF member who selflessly gave her time and efforts to help VBCF for many years, until she lost her battle with breast cancer in 1998.

Karin Decker Noss, a retired Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, served in the military for over 20 years. When she was diagnosed with Stage III breast cancer in July 1995, her life changed forever. Karin quickly dedicated her life to breast cancer advocacy – working tirelessly in both the legislative and medical communities and dedicating herself to furthering knowledge of scientific issues associated with breast cancer. She wanted people to know the truth about breast cancer.

Karin, VBCF’s Immediate Past President, began serving on the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation Board of Directors in 1997 and represented VBCF on the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) Board of Directors as well as numerous committees beginning in 1998. She was a graduate of both Project LEAD and Project LEAD Clinical Trials programs. She served as President and committee chair on the Y-ME National Breast Cancer Organization Board and served the Y-ME National Capital Area Affiliate in several roles, including President. Karin also served on several peer review panels for both the Department of Defense (DoD) and California Breast Cancer Research Programs and was a member of the DoD Breast Cancer Research Integration Panel. Karin lost her battle with breast cancer on February 16, 2008, but many will benefit from the work that she did and the trials in which she participated.

A scholarship fund has been established in Karin’s name. To contribute, send a donation with “Karin Noss” in the memo line to VBCF.

Meg Shrader Awarded Sharon H. Kohlenberg Healthcare Service Award

VBCF established the Sharon H. Kohlenberg Healthcare Service Award in 1995 to recognize Virginians employed in the healthcare field who “exhibit a deep and abiding commitment to the fight against breast cancer.” The award also honors the memory of Sherry Kohlenberg, a healthcare administrator and co-founder of VBCF, who died from breast cancer in 1993. Given in the past to a wide range of healthcare providers – from surgeons to nurses to social workers – the Kohlenberg Award enables VBCF to recognize providers who have gone above and beyond to support those affected by breast cancer.

In 2006, after a dynamic career in maternal-child nursing, Meg Shrader accepted the newly created position of Breast Cancer Navigator at Rockingham Memorial Hospital in Harrisonburg, Virginia. She then completed Navigator Training and Project LEAD and now sits on the Department of Defense Peer Review Committee. She has recently worked with hospital administration to design, plan and move its out-patient mammography center to a new site that offers patients full-service from screening to diagnosis.

In addition to her work, Meg participates with the Breast Health Coalition of the Valley, co-producing a monthly television program “You & Me on 3.” She serves as President of the VBCF Blue Ridge Chapter, and participates in as many breast cancer related events as possible. Meg is tireless in her efforts to educate the public, continue her own education, plan programs and personally accompany women from their “abnormal mammograms” through treatment and support. She also helps facilitate a support group. Meg embodies the spirit of the Kohlenberg Award, continuously striving to find new ways to provide the best care possible for women with breast cancer.
VBCF Members Visit RAM in Wise County
Yvonne Eisenberg, VBCF Blue Ridge Chapter member

Reaching out through the Remote Area Medical (RAM) Health community in Wise County, Virginia with breast, cervical and ovarian cancer education was done by several members of VBCF and some whom are also members of the Women's Cancer Advocacy Network (WCAN). RAM, at the Wise County Fairgrounds, is the nation's largest free basic health care event. It serves thousands of medically underserved and indigent persons. For some, this event may be the only medical treatment that they receive during the year.

The original purpose of RAM was to provide three main services: vision care such as eye exams, eyeglasses, checks for eye diseases and monitoring intraocular pressure for glaucoma, etc.; dental care to treat dental caries with fillings, extractions, x-rays, etc.; medical care such as diabetes screening and education, pulmonary testing, chest x-rays, pap smears, breast exams, blood work, bone density, EKG, minor surgery, and more. Each year seems to offer just a little more.

The Lions Clubs in Virginia provided free food for all. People stood in line and ate, or ate in the stadium. Golf carts carried food and water to those who could not leave lines (for fear of losing their position and not getting treatments) and to diabetics.

The RAM set-up is remarkable and the volunteers are incredible. They are focused, professional, dedicated and willing to help wherever there is a need. Everyone continued to smile at the end of a very long hot day and was eager to return to complete their mission.

WCAN is the Women's Cancer Advocacy Network dedicated to serving the needs of women diagnosed with breast or reproductive cancers. For the last 7 years WCAN's Margaret's House has gone to this 3 day event and conducted an outdoor classroom. This year Margaret's House touched over 600 people in the classroom setting, and twice that many handing out literature to the fairground crowd. WCAN also had a children's tent, providing health education, back-to-school kits, and a place to rest from the heat of the day and long lines while their mothers attended classes. The VBCF fans were a huge hit!

WCAN had volunteers ranging from 18 to 80 years old. There is a 14 year old girl from the local area that awaits its arrival so that she can help. We also had the honor of Governor Tim Kaine visiting the WCAN tent site during his visit to RAM this year. This home based mission trip leaves one with that warm fuzzy feeling of knowing a good deed has been done, but better than that, it was very appreciated and needed.

VBCF members that worked and supported RAM this year were Becky Morris, Gay Rudis, Yvonne Eisenberg, Brenda Saunders, Mary Saunders and Maggie Powers in addition to 15 or so other volunteers helping with our women's cancer educational mission.

Impressions of a first-time RAM-er
Gay Rudis, VBCF Board President

Per information provided from the Lion's Club, over 2,600 patients were seen at the RAM event in Wise County this past July, the largest number to date. Folks had to be turned away on Sunday as there were no spots left. The number of procedures performed at "no cost" to the patient was even larger, of course, as many patients received multiple services.

This was my first visit to RAM and it really made an impression. I was part of the on-site volunteer group with WCAN, but there were many more volunteers that made this educational outreach successful. The Christ United Methodist Church in Richmond, VA provided much support and also use of their facilities prior to the event. On July 12, many gathered at the church to pack tote bags with information. One piece of information that was included was a brochure on the Every Women's Life (EWL) Program. VBCF paid for these brochures to be produced as the EWL program had no money to print these publications. Each person that attended a session at RAM received one of the tote bags.

Guaranteed Access to Quality Health Care for All has been one of our legislative priorities for several years. Working with the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC), VBCF has promoted this priority at both the state and federal levels. In events, such as RAM, the urgency and necessity of this priority is easily seen.

In remote areas, such as Wise County, VA, there are often a limited number of medical professionals to perform services. So even if a person had insurance or the ability to pay, they might not have access to the needed medical services. I wonder how many women opt for mastectomy, instead of lumpectomy, when faced with a breast cancer diagnosis. With daily radiation treatments for several weeks, I can only imagine the hardship imposed by having to travel one or more hours each way to receive the treatment.

The University of Virginia had their mammogram van on-site. VBCF board member, Alison Gaucher, was part of the UVA team providing this service. Per the Lion's Club, over 150 mammograms were performed.

I also learned that this is not the only RAM event in Virginia. There are more one-day events in other areas of the state. In 2009, I hope to expand my participation in these types of events and to continue my advocacy efforts.
The VBCF Board of Directors has recently decided to assume the coordination of educational outreach efforts regarding women's cancers at the Remote Area Medical (RAM) Clinic in Wise County for 3 days in July. Women's Cancer Advocacy Network (WCAN) previously provided education, but is no longer able to do so. RAM is a collaborative effort between several groups and organizations to provide medical, dental, and vision care for those in attendance. While people travel from all over to receive care, patients at the RAM Clinic are primarily from the coal counties of Virginia. This region is home to some of the most medically underserved population in the state. Educational programs are provided for those who must wait in line for hours to received services. VBCF will work with other organizations to provide information regarding screening, diagnosis and treatment of breast, cervical, ovarian, and uterine cancers as well as distributing information regarding the Every Woman's Life Program.
A Huge Thank You
To the Following Businesses and Organizations

- Books-A-Million hosted a Breast Cancer Awareness Day on October 12 at their West Broad and Midlothian Turnpike stores in Richmond as well as stores in Colonial Heights and Williamsburg. Customers received VBCF literature and pink ribbons and VBCF received a portion of the proceeds from that day’s sales, raising almost $1,000. The event was very successful and we hope to do another one in the spring.

- First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond donated plate collections from October 19 to VBCF. They collected and donated more than $950. In addition, they, like many place of worship, helped raise the awareness of breast cancer. Please let us know if your church can do the same.

- The Shoppes at Westgate in Richmond hosted a Breast Cancer Awareness event on October 23. Shops distributed VBCF literature and pink ribbons to educate shoppers. Some shops donated a portion of their sales to VBCF and others participated in raffles which benefitted VBCF. Over $1100 was raised. Live musical entertainment and free goodies were also part of the evening’s activities.

- Skyline Sport and Health Club in Falls Church hosted a week long awareness event – distributing materials, raising awareness and encouraging members to donate to VBCF.

- Hampton Roads BMW Motorcycle Club hosted a ride on October 4, raising awareness, distributing materials and ribbons and donating money to VBCF.

- Wells, Coleman and Company, an accounting firm in Richmond, held an event with its employees, donating $320.

- Stephanie Russell, Uppercase Living Independent Demonstrator, hosted a Vendor Fair which also included VBCF educational materials and ribbons. Proceeds from the event benefitted VBCF.

- Java Mio Coffeehouse in Old Towne Petersburg, hosted a Friday night awareness event, with live music, t-shirt sales and lots of fun!

- The Art of Surviving, a month long art show which was coordinated by Terry Lynn Smith with several other artists affected by breast cancer and surgeries, was held at the ArtWorks Gallery in Richmond. VBCF was invited to share educational resources and proceeds.

Please contact VBCF if you know of someone who would like to host an event to raise awareness and/or to raise funds.
22nd Annual Women’s Memorial Golf Tournament Raises over $40,000!

The 22nd Annual Women’s Memorial Golf Tournament was held on July 26 at the Crossings. As usual, Sharon Talarico and her volunteers put their hearts, time and energy into making this tournament a tremendous success. This year the popular invitational tournament raised $40,796 to support the educational programs and advocacy efforts of the VBCF. We deeply appreciate the work of all the volunteers and the gifts and contributions of the many donors to this event. To see a list of all our wonderful donors for this event please see our website, www.vbcf.org.

The Queen of P.I.N.K. 2008 Pageant was a Tremendous Success!

Congratulations to Gia Lawrence, the 2008 Queen of P.I.N.K. We look forward to working with Gia this year on her quest to spread breast cancer awareness and beautifully represent the title. Many thanks to Ashley Smith, Executive Director of Queen of P.I.N.K., pageant participants, and the many volunteers who made this event a success. The Queen of P.I.N.K. Pageant was able to raise over $3000 to benefit VBCF.

Employee Giving Programs

Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation participates in many workplace giving programs throughout the state including various United Way programs, the Combined Federal Campaign, and the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign in addition to individual employer programs and matching programs. By designating VBCF as the organization to receive your donation, you will be contributing to our important mission of eradicating breast cancer through valuable education and advocacy efforts.

- Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) use code 43602
- Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (CVC) use code 3787
- Local Government and Schools Campaign use code 0149

Other programs provide a directory of codes or allow you to specify an organization. If you can’t find VBCF on your program’s list, contact our office and we will assist you. We appreciate your donations!

At no cost to you....

What if you could donate to VBCF every time you searched the Internet or made a purchase on-line? Or what if VBCF could receive two dollars for every one dollar you donate? Luckily, through innovative programs and services you can!

Search Engines:

GoodSearch.com is a Yahoo-powered search engine that donates half its advertising revenue, about a penny per search, to charities. Use it just as you would any search engine, and watch the donations add up! You can even download a search toolbar. Just go to goodsearch.com and designate Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation as your charity of choice.

Searchandgive.com is a Microsoft search engine that works in a similar fashion. Designate Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation as your charity and the donations come directly to us. It is that easy!

Shopping On-Line:

Just in time for the holiday shopping season... GoodShop.com is a new online shopping mall which donates up to 37 percent of each purchase to your favorite cause! Hundreds of stores including Amazon, Target, Gap, Best Buy, eBay, Macy’s and Barnes & Noble have teamed up with GoodShop so that every time you place an order, you can send a donation to VBCF. Just go to GoodShop.com and choose Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation as your charity.

Spread the word! It’s free and allows VBCF to continue working toward our goal of eradicating breast cancer through education and advocacy.

Donate your vehicle:

You get a tax deduction, VBCF gets a gift, and your driveway gets more usable space. What could be better? Go to vehiclesforcharity.org or call the VBCF office for more information.

Employer Match:

Many employers match donations, so when you donate to VBCF, check to see if your employer will match your gift.

Special Thanks to

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

for providing funding for this issue of One Voice.
Support VBCF!

Please fill out form(s) and return with your check to VBCF.

☐ Please contact me about becoming a VBCF Volunteer.

I would like to make a contribution of:

☐ Supporter $50  ☐ Friend $100  ☐ Patron $250
☐ Benefactor $500  ☐ Champion $1,000  ☐ Other $_____ 

Name: ________________________________

Address: ________________________________

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Phone: _______________ Fax: _______________

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A contribution of $___________ is enclosed.

In Memory Of: ________________________________
or In Honor Of: ________________________________

(If you would like an acknowledgement card sent, please include name and address of recipient)

Name: ________________________________

Address: ________________________________

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☐ Please send me information on planned giving.

This newsletter, published by the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, focuses on breast cancer issues and the activities of VBCF supporters. If you wish to join VBCF, or have any editorial comments, please call (800) 345-VBCF or write to: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, 5004 Monument Avenue, Suite 102, Richmond, VA 23230

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