Advances in Breast Cancer: Highlights of the 2006 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium by Karin Decker Noss, Board President

Along with an ever-increasing number of researchers, clinicians, and fellow advocates, I again attended the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium in December. The Symposium is one of the few meetings each year focused solely on breast cancer and I always come away with renewed hope for improvements in the way we treat cancer as we ultimately try to eradicate this disease.

The conference agenda was so interesting this year that it was hard to find time to take a break for some fresh air. If a full day’s agenda wasn’t enough, several drug companies and educational organizations hosted satellite symposia, which made for some long, tiring days. However, I found all the sessions and poster presentations quite useful. Following are some of the highlights.

Decreased Incidence of Breast Cancer

Probably the most reported press story from San Antonio was that the incidence of breast cancer had declined significantly and that is was because of the reduced use of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). That is not quite accurate. Dr. Ravdin reported that as of 2003 (the most recent year for which we have data) breast cancer incidence declined by 7 percent. He also said the greatest reduction in incidence is for women older than 50 who are hormone receptor positive. He only suggested that we might see a greater reduction in incidence in future years with the decline in HRT use, but he could not say that the 2003 data was because of the change in HRT use. We do hope, however, that he will prove right. Continued on page 6.

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation & the Southern Virginia Regional Medical Center are proud to present:

Genes and Risk for Breast Cancer: What Do You Need To Know?
featuring John M. Quillin, PhD, MPH, CGC of the Department of Human Genetics and Massey Cancer Center at Virginia Commonwealth University

Date: Thursday, April 19
Time: 5:30 - 6:30 pm
Location: Southern Virginia Regional Medical Center, Emporia
Cost: Free

For more information, or to RSVP, contact Jaime Strohacker at 1-800-345-8223 or by email at Jaime@vbcf.org.
This issue I decided to focus on the education part of the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation’s (VBCF) mission. Not only is education important to the VBCF, it is important to me...and I believe it should be important to everyone.

I found a lump in my breast in early 1994, but the mammogram report said there was no evidence of cancer. The doctor I saw at the National Naval Medical Center told me it was “nothing to worry about—that a lot of women my age had lumpy breasts,” and didn’t do any further testing. I also didn’t know how fallible mammograms could be. So, you can imagine my surprise and anger when, in July 1995, I learned I had stage II breast cancer. I vowed right there and then to learn as much as I could, so that I would never again be at the mercy of a doctor who didn’t do his or her job.

After my initial diagnosis, I started looking around for breast cancer organizations to join, and I also found out that consumer advocates were involved in the DoD Breast Cancer Research Program (BCRP). I was anxious to get involved and to find ways to ensure others like me did not become the victims of malpractice. I began attending local programs that educated me on the various facets of breast cancer and applied to the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC) Fund’s Project LEAD. Project LEAD (Leadership, Education, and Advocacy Development) is an intense 4-day course that presents the basics of breast cancer and ways to initiate or improve advocacy efforts. After I completed LEAD, I was fortunate to be able to serve as one of the consumer advocates on a DoD BCRP scientific peer review panel. For those of you who may be interested in applying to Project LEAD, you can find more information and an application at www.stopbreastcancer.org.

Project LEAD and serving on the DoD panel whetted my appetite for more scientific education and, in addition to attending local educational events like those the VBCF hosts, I also sought out national conferences such as the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium (SABCS). You can read more about the most recent SABCS and the Young Survival Coalition’s annual conference in this issue. Also, stay tuned for more about the VBCF’s educational conferences this year.

So why am I so hot on breast cancer education? Well, I firmly believe it has improved the quality of the care I have received. My doctors treat me as an equal, and we decide together what the best treatment is for me to pursue. I have also been able to advise others on questions they should ask their doctors about their treatments. More importantly, however, education has made me a more effective advocate on a much broader level. Education has given me the credibility to “sit at the table” where decisions about research, treatment, and legislation are made, and I am very proud to say that we have many well-educated people who are part of the VBCF that sit at these tables along with me.

While I chose one path to education, there are many other paths. Everyone must choose the path that is right for herself/himself. If we are to cure breast cancer, we need many more educated advocates.

VBCF pledges to keep you apprised of educational opportunities through this newsletter and other notices. Just remember our motto: Educate. Advocate. Eradicate!

Karin Decker Noss

The Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation is a grassroots organization committed to the eradication of breast cancer through education and advocacy.

Educate. Advocate. Eradicate.
Blue Ridge Chapter

The Blue Ridge Chapter will be hosting its Third Annual Pink Ribbon Hi Tea on April 14 at the Linden Heights Baptist Church in Staunton. This year’s title will be “Down the Garden Path.” Doors will open at 2:30pm and Tea service will begin at 3:15pm. Hats admired but not required.

Central Virginia Chapter

The Central VA Chapter was the recipient of $2,000 raised at the Colonial Heights American Legion Post 284 Valentine Dance, coordinated by Legionnaire Bobby Mingoski and auxiliary member Rita Feasemyer. Chapter President Kathy Funk was given the opportunity at this event to speak for a few minutes about VBCF and the importance of the fight against breast cancer.

Central Virginia Chapter - Con’t

The Central VA Chapter will be presenting a program on Innovations in Breast Cancer Surgery with Dr. Amy Rose, Surgeon, Surgical Associates. The program will take place April 19, 6:30 – 7:30pm at the CJW Medical Center, Johnston Willis Campus Main Auditorium. The event is free and open to the public.

Hampton Roads Chapter

New Chapter Officers for the Hampton Roads Chapter have been installed for the 2007 year. Pictured are (l-r): Treasurer Marilyn Lewis, Secretary Cynthia Armstead, President Eunice McMillan, Vice President Tuwanna Okafor. (Not pictured – Corresponding Secretary Pearline Harmon)

New Members of the Board of Directors:

Shirley George has been an active member of VBCF for several years. She is a charter member of the Hampton Roads Chapter. Her work within the chapter has focused on public relations, activities and organizing events. Shirley is an active member of her local community, serving on several boards. She is a former special education teacher in Norfolk and currently serves as the UniServ Director for the Norfolk Office of the Virginia Education Association.

Sharon Whitley became involved with VBCF 15 years ago. As a member of the Peninsula Chapter, she has been active with the Spring Fashion Show and the Fall Golf Tournament. She has also attended both State and National Lobby Days. Sharon is currently serving as the President of the Peninsula Chapter. She is retired from the Department of Defense and works as a special education instructional assistant in the Hampton City Schools.
Volunteer Spotlight: Carol Guyre

This issue's Volunteer Spotlight focuses on Carol Guyre, Member of the Blue Ridge Chapter and Chairperson of the Blue Ridge Chapter Pink Ribbon Hi Tea. Carol was diagnosed with breast cancer in June of 2000 after a routine mammogram. Her treatment included a lumpectomy and radiation.

Carol became involved with VBCF in 2003 after joining a singing group called Schola Cantorum. During a rehearsal she met someone who knew about the Blue Ridge Chapter of VBCF and that Carol was a breast cancer survivor. It was obvious to Carol from the first meeting she attended that "these gals were on a mission to eradicate breast cancer, and that there was a plan in place to accomplish this."

Carol brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her role as Chairperson of the Blue Ridge Chapter Pink Ribbon Hi Tea. Before moving to Virginia, Carol became well known in the Central New York area for her presentations on fashion history. She has studied fashion and textiles almost all of her life. She augmented her general interest with specific studies in the history of fashion throughout the centuries. After moving to Richmond, Virginia, she became employed as a Registered Bridal Consultant with Schwartzschilds Jewelers. She also lectured to young, would-be executives on the proper etiquette in dining and entertaining. Carol has used this passion and knowledge in her three years as Chairperson of the Blue Ridge Chapter Pink Ribbon Hi Tea to turn the event into an overwhelming success.

Aside from her leadership with the Pink Ribbon Hi Tea, Carol has also attended both National and State Lobby Days, participated in several health fairs, been involved with the "Quilt Pink" project, and participated in several Relays for Life. Carol also participated in the Blue Ridge Chapter's inaugural presentation of Breast Cancer Awareness to Girl Scouts statewide.

In an article published by the local newspaper, the women of the Blue Ridge Chapter were referred to as warriors instead of survivors. Carol is delighted to be one of the warriors involved with the quest to eradicate breast cancer. It is her hope and prayer that "our daughters and granddaughters will not experience the pain of this traumatic life threatening disease." VBCF salutes Carol for her continued hard work and dedication as one of the warriors in the VBCF mission to Educate, Advocate, Eradicate.

All Chapters Meeting

The 5th Annual All Chapters Meeting will take place at Chippenham Johnston Willis Hospital in Chesterfield Saturday, June 2, 10am – 3pm. Chapter members have a great time sharing helpful strategies and realizing that they are part of a statewide effort. This year's focus will be on the visual face of VBCF and developing consistency across chapters in our marketing efforts. Join us as we team up to fight breast cancer in our local communities.

Save the Date: Learn to Advocate for Yourself at VBCF's Fredericksburg Program!

June 23 will be an important date for VBCF. We will be partnering with Mary Washington Hospital and the Rappahannock Area Health District Breast and Cervical Cancer Coalition to bring an important program on Self-Advocacy to the Fredericksburg, VA area. This program will feature a plenary speaker and a panel to help answer questions on how to work with your medical team, insurance, and advocate for yourself during your breast cancer treatment and beyond. The program will take place from 9:00am to 12:00pm in Mary Washington Hospital Auditorium 3. Visit www.vbcf.org soon for more information or contact Jaime Strohacker at 1-800-345-8223. We hope you can join us to learn more about how to advocate for yourself in the healthcare system! We look forward to seeing you June 23!

Pink Ribbons for Sale!

We have a limited number of magnetic ribbons available for purchase. The ribbons are 8" x 4" and are printed with the VBCF logo and our motto: Educate. Advocate. Eradicate.

The ribbons are $5.00 each and are available on our website, www.vbcf.org, or by calling 1-800-345-8223.

Newly Diagnosed?

Have you recently been diagnosed with breast cancer or know someone who has? Contact VBCF to receive a Newly Diagnosed Information Packet, which contains information on how to understand your pathology report, emotional healing, treatment options and more. Call 804-285-1200 or 1-800-345-8223 or email Lisa@vbcf.org.
From the Annual Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer: A first-time attendee’s impressions

By Juliet Brown, VBCF Volunteer

Over 850 young women, caregivers, spouses, partners and health care professionals attended the 7th Annual Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer, held February 23 – 25 at the Hyatt Crystal City in Arlington, Virginia, and hosted by Living Beyond Breast Cancer and the Young Survival Coalition. This is the only international event focused on the unique needs and issues faced by women diagnosed before age 45.

The three-day weekend symposium delivered presentations on the latest research, question and answer sessions with industry experts, over 20 workshops to choose from – ranging in topics from navigating the health care system to dating after breast cancer, and an exhibition hall featuring more than 50 organizations, advocates, and vendors.

On Saturday night, attendees were invited to a cocktail reception, dinner and dancing. Patty Brisben, CEO and founder of Pure Romance and creator of Sensuality, Sexuality, Survival, a breast cancer program that addresses the effects of breast cancer and treatments on intimacy, hosted a sizzling pajama party, dubbed, “The Ultimate Girls Night In.”

Sunday kicked off with an early morning yoga class for all conference participants, reinforcing the importance of inner balance and physical activity in fighting and surviving cancer.

The weekend effectively weighed the latest medical research, obstacles of healthcare and intense dialogue with celebration, honor and laughter.

I Am Not Alone

The National Cancer Institute reports that breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in young women ages 15–54 (2004 Fact Book). As a statistic, and a pretty clear one at that, it’s difficult to comprehend the magnitude until you stand together with hundreds of young survivors all around you in the same room. The opportunity to experience that, by virtue of the conference, was powerful. Diagnosed at age 29, leading a healthy lifestyle of moderate exercise and decent eating habits, on a career path, enjoying the first years of marriage, thinking about children, the list goes on…I am not alone.

This was my first young survivors’ conference. There were lots of girls who had clearly done this before. They seemed to know each other like childhood friends. I couldn’t help thinking – do you make these kinds of friends in a weekend’s time? Or are they old friends, who happen to have all been struck with this disease, and what are those odds? Maybe they were old friends, rallying around a single survivor.

I suppose it could be any of these scenarios, but my point is they were having fun like good friends, sisters or cousins do. They laughed a lot, and loudly; they piddled around each other for countless photographs. It could have been a bachelor-ette party for all anyone knew, what with all the pink feathers, matching t-shirts and rhinestone tiaras declaring all things woman.

On the other hand, my agenda was far more reserved – take copious notes, gather lots of reading material, ask serious questions. And so I had to think about it before I got what was going on around me. Cancer is not strictly professional. Of course it’s not always a party either. But there is plenty of joy to discover along the way and to share with those around us. Don’t get me wrong – I took plenty of notes, gathered tons of reading material and even asked a few questions. And so did they. But they made it fun, meaningful, personal. Because it is.

I was glad to be there, to absorb the energy around me, to embrace the magnitude of young women facing breast cancer, and to be empowered to lift up my voice for someone to hear.

Among the pink rhinestone cowboy hats, feather boas, and witty t-shirts that read like clever bumper stickers, perhaps the most powerful symbol of promise was a young mother and her baby girl. I overheard her say she had a bilateral mastectomy, then chemo; she chose reconstruction; and she delivered a healthy baby into this world. All this, inside of two years.

Surrounded by hundreds of pre-menopausal women struggling with the fear and betrayal of our own bodies, this mother and daughter gave hope a voice.

For more information about the Annual Conference for Young Women Affected by Breast Cancer, visit www.younsgsurvivorsconference.org.

Would You Like to Attend a Breast Cancer Conference?

VBCF offers educational sponsorship to numerous conferences throughout the year, including the NBCC Advocacy Conference, Project LEAD, the San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium, and more. Conferences are a great opportunity for you to gain new knowledge about the latest in various areas of breast cancer research and advocacy, as well as to network and meet others who are involved in the fight against breast cancer.

VBCF sponsorship covers up to two-thirds the cost of hotel and transportation. Sponsorships are awarded on a competitive basis. Visit www.vbcf.org or call 1-800-345-8223 for more information on sponsorship opportunities and how you can apply.
VBCF Mourns the Loss of Faye Mullins Bennett

Faye Mullins Bennett, a VBCF Board Member from 1998 - 2000, lost her 10-year battle with breast cancer on February 27, 2007. Faye was instrumental in the effort to start the Richmond Chapter of VBCF and served as the Chapter's first Co-President for the 1998-1999 year. In her term as Co-President she was instrumental in helping to get the Richmond Chapter off the ground, and worked hard to make sure that Chapter meetings were meaningful and included great programs. She continued to serve the Richmond Chapter as the Publicity/Hospitality Chair through 2000, when a recurrence of her breast cancer forced her to decrease her involvement. She is remembered fondly by fellow founding Chapter member Becky Morris as a sweet person who “fought for every new treatment option.” Faye was a shining example of the strong women and men who have made VBCF the organization it is today.

Advances in Breast Cancer - Con't from Cover

Her 2 Cancers and New Targeted Therapies

Dr. Slamon spoke of the successes we've had with Herceptin (trastuzumab) both in the metastatic and adjuvant settings and about a new monoclonal antibody, Tykerb (lapatinib) that is similar to Herceptin, but targets both Her2 and Her1. Of note, one of the adjuvant trials of Herceptin included an arm without an anthracycline such as Adriamycin (doxorubicin) that provided an overall benefit. This means that those patients concerned about cardiac events have another treatment option.

Dr. Cristofallani presented the results of a trial of neoadjuvant (before surgery) Taxol (paclitaxel) and Tykerb for patients with inflammatory breast cancer (IBC). Cohort A was Her 2 positive. Cohort B was Her 1 positive and Her 2 negative. Both cohorts had clinical response rates (partial and complete responses) of over 75 percent. These results suggest a new approach to treating IBC, which is traditionally difficult to treat successfully. Also of great interest were the TAnDEM trial results of Arimidex (anastrozole) with or without Herceptin presented by Dr. Mackey. The result of this trial (that did not include traditional chemotherapy) was a better progression free survival (PFS) for patients on the combination. Effective regimens that don't include traditional chemotherapy may have fewer side effects and provide a better quality of life for patients.

Dr. Cameron presented the results of a third study in which patients with Herceptin-resistant tumors were randomized to treatment with Xeloda (capecitabine) alone or Xeloda plus Tykerb. Patients receiving the combination had a statistically significant slower time to progression (TTP) of disease (8.4 months vs. 4.4 months). Of note, Dr. Cameron and his team also tried to determine whether there were markers that would predict who would respond better to Tykerb. This increasing trend to identify new markers and molecular profiles is important if we aim to tailor therapy to the individual patient.

Molecular Profiling

A presentation by Dr. Perou focused on how researchers are now trying to classify tumors based on their molecular classification instead of the way we now classify them based on size, lymph node involvement, and hormone receptor status. While this new classification isn't being used in the clinic yet, Dr. Perou described two ongoing trials, TAILORx and MiNDACT, that are based on molecular profiling and are intended to tell us more precisely who will benefit from chemotherapy and who will not. The hope for the
VBCF's Pink Ribbon License Plate is now available for purchase at your local DMV!

Visit your local DMV or log on to www.dmv.state.va.us to order your plate today!

Got an Unwanted Vehicle?

Instead of selling, trading or storing your vehicle, you can make a donation to VBCF and receive a tax deduction. Cars, trucks, motorcycles, boats, recreational vehicles, and campers are accepted. Call 1-866-628-CARS or visit www.vehiclesforcharity.org today for free pickup of your unwanted vehicle.

Sign Up for the VBCF Connection!

VBCF recently debuted our first monthly e-newsletter, the VBCF Connection. Each month we will bring you timely information about breast cancer and VBCF’s programs and activities.

The e-newsletter is one more way we can partner with you as we continue to work towards our mission...the eradication of breast cancer through education and advocacy.

If you would like to receive the VBCF Connection visit www.vbcf.org to sign up!

Upcoming VBCF Fundraisers

Save the Date for PINK!

The Shooting Star Gallery, LLC in Suffolk will be hosting an art show called “PINK” as a benefit for the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, Saturday, April 21, 2007.

The day long celebration will include Toni Russ (a breast cancer survivor) and co-workers of Cindy's Hair & Nail Boutique providing haircuts from 10:00am until 12:00pm, and manicures from 10:00am until 4:00pm, with all proceeds to benefit VBCF.

A “Building Baskets for Breast Cancer” project is also planned in which everyone is encouraged to put together baskets, built around a theme, that will be part of a silent auction ending at 6:00pm on April 21. Bring your own basket or Shooting Star will provide them. Shrink wrap, fillers, tissue paper and ribbon will be provided by the gallery.

For more information contact Brenda Wright at sutnstar@aol.com. Come join in a day of art and fun to benefit VBCF!

Calling All Bowlers!

G.R.I.T.S.
- Girls Rolling In The South
(a women's bowling group) has chosen VBCF as this year's Tournament Charity. The tournament will be held on May 18 - 20, 2007 at AMF - Sunset Lanes, 6540 West Broad St., Richmond, VA 23230. Check out the G.R.I.T.S. website for more information on the group and the tournament at www.gritsinv.com. Come out, join the fun, and knock down some pins in the fight against breast cancer!
Conferences/Educational Events
State and regional conferences, seminars, and teleconferences provide individuals with up-to-date information on breast cancer issues.

Local Chapters
Chapter members have the opportunity to make a difference in their communities through a variety of volunteer efforts.

Website
Our website www.vbcf.org furnishes VBCF supporters with updates on advocacy issues, the voting records of Virginia politicians, past newsletters, resources and events.

Speakers Bureau
Our Speakers Bureau Presentation, Stay Abreast, has over 70 committed volunteers who speak throughout the state.

Breast Cancer License Plate
This is a great awareness tool visible throughout the state and can be purchased through your local DMV.

State and Federal Lobby Days
Volunteers from around the state gather twice a year to meet their legislators and lobby for support of breast cancer issues.

Advocacy Awareness
Trained volunteers and staff provide assistance to the public in responding to legislative issues during sessions of Congress and the General Assembly.

Virginia Breast Cancer Awareness Month Calendar
This calendar, distributed free of charge, contains information on October events and programs sponsored by a variety of organizations.

Newly Diagnosed Packets
These are a compilation of information regarding resources and issues pertinent to those newly diagnosed with breast cancer.

Pink Ribbon Campaign
Each year we distribute and average of 50,000 pink ribbons attached to a card with information on breast health.

Health Fairs and other community events
VBCF volunteers distribute breast cancer information in local communities throughout the state – in malls, religious organizations, conferences, etc.

Want more information? Call VBCF at 1-800-345-8223.

This newsletter, published by the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, focuses on breast cancer issues and the activities of VBCF supporters. If you wish to support VBCF, or have any editorial comments, please call 1-800-345-VBCF or write to: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, 5004 Monument Avenue, Suite 102, Richmond, VA 23230