



KEEPING ABREAST

Working to find the causes and stop the epidemic

MarinBreastCancerWatch

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Fall 2001

STOP BREAST CANCER WHERE IT STARTS

Beyond Breast Cancer Awareness Month



MBCW Interim Executive Director Janice Barlow and Administrative Assistant Adrienne Kolb receive the resolution from Supervisor Hal Brown, Jr.

Once again the Marin County Board of Supervisors has shown its commitment to breast cancer by unanimously passing a resolution proclaiming October "Stop Cancer Where it Starts: Beyond Breast Cancer Awareness Month."

The resolution will continue to bring awareness not only to the incidence of and possible cures for breast cancer, but also the environmental links to breast cancer. It also proclaims county support for community-based breast cancer research and breast cancer education and outreach efforts.

A key part of the resolution states that health and environmental policies should be guided by the "Precautionary Principle." Simply, it says that potentially harmful products and practices should be evaluated for safety to human health and the environment before the public is exposed, as opposed to taking action only after harm or risk has been proven.

Through the continued work of MBCW and the Breast Cancer Coordinating Council and others, the resolution is a reality for a second year. The active participation and increased level of concern among county residents about breast cancer and the environment is reflected in this resolution. MBCW wants to thank the Board of Supervisors for its dedication to breast cancer—especially Hal Brown, for his leadership on this issue.

Following is a copy of the resolution:

**Marin County Board of Supervisors Resolution
PROCLAIMING
"STOP CANCER WHERE IT STARTS:
BEYOND BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH"
OCTOBER, 2001**

WHEREAS, breast cancer incidence in Marin County women remains among the highest reported in the United States and is currently 160/100,000 per year through 1998; and

WHEREAS, breast cancer incidence in Marin County continues to increase, particularly in women who are 45-64 years of age; and

WHEREAS, detection methods, such as mammography, can only find cancers that already exist and, thus, have no impact on the rising numbers of people developing breast cancer; and

WHEREAS, aside from smoking, little or no attention is given to the possible causes of breast cancer; and

WHEREAS, the County of Marin values the individuals and organizations that work together to find answers to the many questions posed by the high incidence of breast cancer in the County; and

WHEREAS, active participation by County residents in Marin Breast Cancer Watch and the Canary Projects of Stinson Beach, Tomales Bay and Point Reyes Station reveals a continuing high level of citizen attention and involvement in breast cancer; and

WHEREAS, the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services has entered into a contractual relationship with Marin Breast Cancer Watch with monies obtained from the state and federal governments to do community-based breast cancer research in collaboration with Bay Area institutions of higher educations; and

WHEREAS, the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services' Breast Cancer Action Plan includes a Breast Cancer Program, convening the Breast Cancer Coordinating Council of Marin County ("BCCC"); and

WHEREAS, the BCCC draws from its multidisciplinary membership to collaborate with the community to increase awareness of breast cancer and breast health, to improve education and outreach

Continued on page 12

MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MBCW Forges Ahead

Janice Marie Barlow, BSN, PNP



Although many of us are still grieving the loss of Francine Levien, we are also very grateful for the years we had with our founder and visionary. It is with continuing love and loyalty to Francine that MBCW is forging ahead. The coming months will be a true test for us as an organization. We have made so

much progress as a group, but there is much yet to be done. From finishing current research projects, to beginning new ones, to hosting a number of educational and informational forums addressing environmental causes of breast cancer, we continue to evolve and grow.

To build upon our success and increase our visibility and effectiveness, we need continued support from Marin County residents. After all, we are a community organization. Our strength and ability to deliver on our mission are only as good as the involvement of community members.

A look ahead shows how active we will be in our efforts to find the causes and stop the epidemic of breast cancer. The month of October is the start of the Marin Breast Cancer Watch fall campaign to Stop Breast Cancer Where It Starts. As an organization, we have moved beyond simply promoting breast cancer awareness. We actively seek out and conduct groundbreaking research aimed at identifying the causes of the increasing incidence of breast cancer in Marin.

We are particularly excited that the county has agreed to fund The Marin County Environmental Data Study, a project Francine Levien and members of the community started a year and half ago. It is finally a reality and we will begin compiling data soon. The Adolescent Risk Factor Study will be completed in the spring of 2002 and will yield information on breast cancer that is specific to Marin County.

In the upcoming year we will continue our community-based forums by offering two educational and three informational events on breast cancer. They will have a particular emphasis on the environmental causes of breast cancer.

As a grassroots organization, we believe strongly that the community can and must play a critical role in advancing breast cancer research and creating public policy. Only then can we hope to achieve the goals we set for ourselves.

There are many meaningful ways that you can participate with us in working to find the causes and stop the epidemic. In this issue of *Keeping Abreast* we extend to you a personal invitation to join us and support community-based breast cancer research and education right here in Marin County. Together we can make a difference.

MBCW Research Projects Gain New Momentum

STUDY OF ADOLESCENT RISK FACTORS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BREAST CANCER

The Marin County Study of Adolescent Risk Factors in the Development of Breast Cancer will be completed in the spring of 2002. According to Dr. Georgie Farren, co-principal investigator of the study, only a few interviews remain to be done. Preliminary analysis of the data is expected to begin this fall.

The study was first funded as a pilot in 1998 by the California Breast Cancer Research Program (BCRP). During the pilot, a questionnaire and innovative memory tools were developed. The memory tools include a visualization tape, a series of photographs of girls during adolescence and a calendar of events designed to enhance recall of adolescent behaviors, exposures and events.

Following the pilot, BCRP funded a two and one-half year epidemiological study of adolescent risk factors in Marin County women. Three hundred women with breast cancer and three hundred women without breast cancer participated in the study.

The Marin County Study of Adolescent Risk Factors in the Development of Breast Cancer is considered to be a successful model of community-based participatory research. Members of the research project presented at the Breast Cancer Research Program Conference on September 16, 2001.

Members of Marin Breast Cancer Watch concerned about the high incidence of breast cancer in Marin forged a partnership with the Department of Epidemiology at UCSF in 1998. Together they designed a rigorous scientific study that not only addressed the specific concerns of the community but also will contribute to the growing body of scientific literature on adolescent risk factors and breast cancer prevention.

Community members actively involved in the Marin County Study of Adolescent Risk Factors in the Development of Breast Cancer include Roni Peskin Mentzer, Flavia Belli, Virginia Souders-Mason, Linda Spence, Mary Gould, and co-principal investigator, Dr. Georgie Farren.

Continued on next page

Dr. Margaret Wrench and Teri Chew from the UCSF Department of Epidemiology guided the research and provided invaluable advice and expertise.

MARIN COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL DATA STUDY BEGINS COLLECTING DATA

We're celebrating!

After a year and a half of planning, writing and re-writing, Marin Breast Cancer Watch has received funding to conduct a Marin County Environmental Data Pilot Study.

In June 2001, Marin Breast Cancer Watch applied, in partnership with the Marin County Health Department, for special funding from the California Department of Health Services Cancer Research Program (CRP). In response to local political and community advocacy efforts, CRP granted a one-time allocation of \$500,000 to the County of Marin for breast cancer research. The Environmental Data Study is one of six breast cancer research projects to be undertaken in Marin County and is funded for \$87,000.

The goal of the Marin County Environmental Data Study is to collect data on Marin's environment. This data will help the community and the health department further investigate known or suspected environmental factors or exposures contributing to Marin County's high incidence of invasive breast cancer.

In addition to identifying available public sources of environmental data specific to Marin County, the study will solicit input from members of the community about possible past and present environmental concerns. Planning is underway for the development of a secure website specifically designed to allow members of the community to participate in the study.

The Marin County Environmental Data Study was developed through a collaborative process led by the community and members of MBCW Environmental Task Force.

The Environmental Task Force was convened in March of 2000 by our founder Francine Levien, with periodic guidance and consultation from scientists and researchers actively involved in environmental and/or breast cancer research. Bringing together community members and scientists, the Environmental Data Study begins the process of addressing community concerns about environmental exposures. Knowing the environmental risk factors for breast cancer development is an area that should be investigated because it offers one of our best hopes for prevention.

MBCW Presents Breast Cancer Educational Forums

As part of the special \$500,000 grant to Marin County from the California Department of Health Services Cancer Research Program, Marin Breast Cancer Watch has received \$19,000 to promote an informational exchange between breast cancer researchers and the community of Marin. In the next two years, MBCW in partnership with the Marin County Health Department will offer two educational and three informational forums on breast cancer and breast cancer research for the community.

**A Personal Invitation
to Participate**

**The Marin County
Environmental
Data Study
provides meaningful
opportunities for your
participation.**

**You can participate
directly in the
pilot study process by
volunteering your time.**

**Call 256-9011 today
if you would like to work
with a dedicated group
of people on a very
important community
research project.**

MBCW ECO-WATCH

Edare Carroll

In an effort to bring attention to environmental and public health concerns in Marin County, Marin Breast Cancer Watch introduces ECO-WATCH, a new column that will report on suspected contaminated sites. This issue we present the facts on Hamilton Field as reported during the last year in the *Marin Independent Journal*.

February 2001:

- Methane gas leak discovered coming from an underground landfill, a 26-acre site containing construction materials and domestic trash—by Army Corps of Engineers during a monitoring program.

Methane, an odorless gas, is not harmful when inhaled. The danger comes from allowing it to collect in a contained area where it becomes combustible at volumes of 5 to 15 percent. Military officials say the gas is at low concentrations and not a danger. However, methane can be a conduit for other chemicals. A fuel additive, methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE), plume from a former Navy gas station and a variety of volatile organic chemicals, including carcinogens, are known to be lingering underground.

- The Regional Water Quality Control Board expresses its concern in a letter to military officials that the methane could carry volatile organic compounds (VOCs). VOCs refers to a class of chemicals, including known and suspected carcinogens, which are ingredients in many household products. The source of the VOCs is the former Quartermaster Salvage Yard, which was a temporary storage area for discarded transformers containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). That site is adjacent to Landfill 26.

- Shea Homes, Hamilton developer, delays construction of planned homes indefinitely because of methane spreading underground.

- Required disclosure statements are circulated to home buyers at the former Hamilton Field. Residents are warned about the possible impacts of methane from the Army's landfill as well as the spread of MTBE at the proposed new site of the Novato Children's Charter school. Hamilton resident Renee Kenney and other parents organize and form "Safe Sites for Children" group.

- Methane gas migrates outside buffer zone to private property planned for new homes. Shea Homes halts construction of planned homes indefinitely after revelations that the methane has spread underground beyond a 6-year-old plastic cap placed over the 26-acre site in 1974 by the military.

- March 21—Shea Homes president Layne Marceau writes to Daniel Ward, chief of the state agency's base closure branch, "There is no longer any question regarding the need for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake immediate remedial action pursuant to the Landfill 26 Final Closure and Post Closure Maintenance Plan. . .we reiterate our previous request for your assistance in getting the Corps to undertake such action."

- May—Bel Marin Keys resident Robert Foley says there is a third contaminated landfill site used to dump a wide array of toxic military waste. Foley documented the issue in a 1980s report he filed as a civilian military sites inspector. Ed Keller, who heads the Army's Base Realignment and Closure office at Hamilton, said review of historic aerial photos of the base do not support that the area had been disturbed. He said interviews are planned with personnel formerly stationed at Hamilton to check Foley's account.

- June 1—Rep. Lynn Woolsey, D-Petaluma, says federal officials will fix lingering problems at Hamilton and pick up the tab for the work. She announces that the Army has decided to release nearly half of the \$1.65 million requested by military cleanup officials to deal with the methane leak. After an hour long briefing, Woolsey leads a caravan of officials to three sites: 1) a former Navy gas station that is the source of an underground plume of MTBE, a suspected carcinogen; 2) Landfill 26, the former bases' capped dump from which potentially explosive methane is migrating underground 3) An unidentified landfill that a former military sites inspector said may contain toxic chemicals. Army officials discounted speculation that the unidentified landfill is contributing to environmental problems there.

- June 1—Jim McAlister of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said \$300,000 had been diverted from another Hamilton cleanup project to Landfill 26, which he said is his agency's top regional priority. It appears the Army will build a trench system

Continued on page 8

2001 CANCER INDUSTRY AWARENESS TOUR— TOXIC LINKS COALITION UPDATE

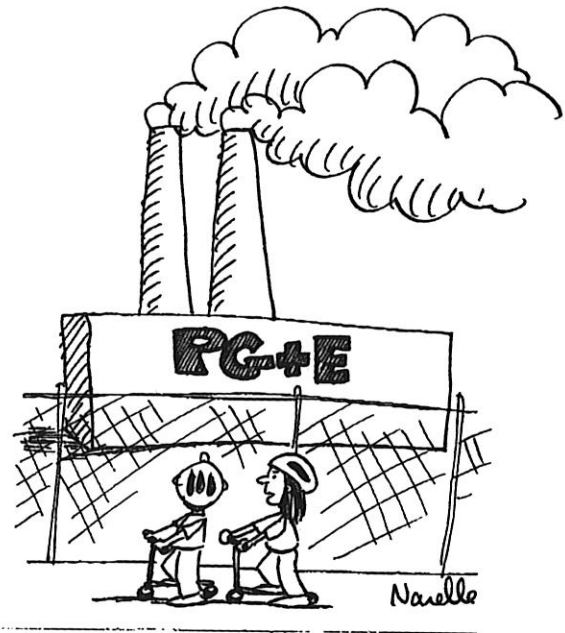
Judy Brady

Started eight years ago by people from various environmental and cancer organizations, the Toxic Links Coalition (TLC) has been involved in a number of issues. We organized the first Bay Area conference about breast cancer, presided over by the late Bella Abzug, in 1995. We have been involved in the fight against the proposed nuclear waste dump in Ward Valley. We participated in the struggles of the West Oakland community threatened by a vinyl chloride plume underneath a new freeway being constructed in their neighborhood. We've supported the struggles of Daly City's Midway Village residents who are being slowly poisoned by the toxic chemicals from waste dumps left behind by PG&E on which their community was built, and we've been part of the fight against the IES medical waste incinerator in Oakland which is spewing out carcinogenic dioxin over the surrounding community. But our signature activity has become the annual Cancer Industry Awareness Tour of San Francisco's financial district.

The tour is always in October—because that's "Breast Cancer Awareness Month"—and we hold it during lunch hour in the middle of the work week. As a colorful and noisy parade, we visit several of the corporate offices of some of the worst polluters and their supporters, (for example some government officials, the public relations firms of the polluters, and the American Cancer Society).

This year we are changing our focus a bit. While greedy power providers walk away with billions of dollars, the rest of us are dimming our lights and still paying exorbitant utility bills. The "energy crisis" is upon us, so the October 3, 2001 tour will focus on how we are being poisoned by power. And the only solutions put forth by either industry or government virtually ensure that our friends and family members will continue to suffer and die from cancers and other environmental illnesses caused by power generation.

There will be more power plants in low-income communities of color, and environmental restrictions on their operations will be eased. Generating electricity with fossil fuels damages our air, our land and our health, leading to global warming, acid rain and smog. The increase in CO² emissions guaranteed by President Bush will further deplete our atmosphere's protective ozone layer. Particulate matter in our air will increase, leading to more cases of asthma and other lung diseases, including cancer.



**I think it stands for pollution,
greed and extinction.**

Perhaps even more frightening, the nuclear industry has recently stepped forward. Their public relations firms are telling us that nuclear energy is "clean" energy, but the truth is that exposure to even very small amounts of ionizing radiation is dangerous to our health. It is the one absolutely uncontested environmental cause of cancer; there is no safe level of exposure. All 103 operating nuclear power plants in the U.S. leak radioactive isotopes and would do so even with 99.9 percent perfect containment. And all nuclear power plants produce waste which is deadly for thousands of years, and there is no safe method for disposing of it.

There are alternatives. They are not cheap or easy. They will take time and resources to develop. But if we allow the "energy crisis" to lead us into more dependency on fossil fuels and nuclear power, we promise ourselves and generations to come an increase in cancer. Already the past chief of the World Health Organization has predicted that by 2020 our present levels of cancer will have doubled.

Marin Breast Cancer Watch has long been a part of the Toxic Links Coalition. Please join us on October 3rd at noon in front of the PG&E building on Market and Beale Streets.

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENTS

Janice Marie Barlow, Interim Executive Director

Second Breast Cancers May Be More Difficult To Treat In Women Taking Tamoxifen

A new study published from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center reports that tamoxifen—a medication used by women with breast cancer to reduce the risk of breast cancer in the opposite breast—may cause a fivefold increased risk of estrogen-receptor (ER) negative breast cancer, a cancer that is more difficult to treat.

The study involved nearly 9,000 women, 50 years or older, in western Washington State who were diagnosed between 1990 and 1998 with localized or regional stage one breast cancer in one breast. The women were followed until cancer developed in the opposite breast, or until they died, or until the completion of the study in December of 1999.

Of the 4,654 women classified as tamoxifen users, 89 developed cancer in the opposite breast. Among the 4,327 women classified as non-tamoxifen users, 100 developed a tumor on the other side. Data analysis showed that 27 percent of the opposite breast tumors that developed in tamoxifen users were ER negative, while only 4 percent of the tumors that developed in non-users were ER negative.

Comparing breast cancer patients who received tamoxifen to those who did not, the researchers found that while the drug appeared to cause a 20 percent reduction in ER positive breast cancer in the opposite breast, it also appeared to increase the risk of ER negative tumors in the opposite breast by nearly 500 percent.

This study is important for two reasons:

- It is the first population-based study to address the estrogen-receptor status of opposite breast tumors among women who have used tamoxifen in the treatment of their breast cancer.
- The results of the study suggest that tamoxifen will decrease a woman's risk of developing cancer in the other breast. However, if they do develop a tumor on the other side, the cancer is more likely to be ER negative. In addition to being more difficult to treat, ER negative

tumors are associated with a higher mortality rate. Women with this type of breast cancer face an eight percent to 35 percent lower five-year survival rate than those whose tumors are ER positive.

Acknowledging that the study design prevented them from evaluating how the duration of tamoxifen therapy affects the risk of developing ER negative breast cancer, the authors caution that further studies are needed to confirm their findings.

References:

Journal of the National Cancer Institute 2001, July 4: 93(13): pgs 1008-1013.

Lion or Crocodile Choices

In his book *Judging Medicine*, George Annas writes about the choice faced by the world's first heart transplant recipient as the "lion and crocodile choice." Christian Barnard MD, the famous heart transplant surgeon argued that, "for a dying man it is not a difficult decision. If a lion chases you to the bank of the river filled with crocodiles you will leap into the water convinced you have a chance to swim to the other side. But you would never accept such odds if there were no lion."

Women who have a high risk for developing breast cancer make lion and crocodiles choices every day. A recent breast cancer prevention study demonstrates how difficult these choices can be. The study, conducted by the Rotterdam Family Cancer Clinic, was published in the July 19, 2001 issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. (1) It shows that preventive bilateral mastectomies in women with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 mutation (breast cancer susceptibility genes), significantly reduced the incidence of breast cancer at three years of follow-up.

The researchers studied 139 women, starting in 1992, known to have a mutation of either BRCA1 or BRCA2. The mutations carry a lifetime breast cancer risk of 55 to 85 percent and ovarian cancer risk of 15 to 65 percent.

Seventy-six of the 139 women in the study chose to have preventative bilateral total mastectomies. Sixty-three women

Continued on page 7

chose to be closely monitored. After three years, eight women in the monitored group developed breast cancer while none of the women who chose preventative mastectomies developed breast cancer.

The results of this study were widely reported in the mainstream press. However, absent in the news articles, was any discussion of the study's limitations. For instance, the follow-up time is only three years. Since many of the women in the study are in their 20s and 30s, it is not known if they will develop cancer in the future. A second limitation is that significantly more women in the mastectomy group (41 percent) had undergone preventive, premenopausal removal of their ovaries (oophorectomy) than had women in the monitoring group (18 percent). Premenopausal removal of ovaries is an intervention already known to significantly reduce the risk of breast cancer in women with BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations.

Also absent in the articles was information on the risks of surgery. The Dutch research team reported "up to 30 percent of women who undergo preventive mastectomies will have surgical complications" (2, 3). Nearly half of women who undergo preventive bilateral mastectomies require repeat operations (4).

Despite the risks associated with the surgery, the long-term uncertainty of the procedure's effectiveness, and our inability to accurately identify which women will develop breast cancer, nearly 50 percent of women who carry the BRCA1 and BRCA2 gene choose to have bilateral mastectomies in the hopes of preventing breast cancer.

Some may think that the greatest strides in preventive cancer research have been in breast cancer (5). Clearly this study shows the difficult choices women must make when dealing with this disease. The availability of genetic testing for inherited mutation in BRCA1 and BRCA2 gives potentially valuable information to women at high risk for ovarian and breast cancers. However, the clinical management options for reducing their cancer risk are few and extreme. The editorial accompanying the publication of this study pinpointed what is most disturbing. "Two decades of research have convincingly shown that most women with breast cancer can safely be treated with breast-conserving surgery instead of mastectomy. Thus it is difficult to accept that prevention should be more extreme than the cure"(6).

References:

1. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2001, July 19: 345(3): pgs 159-64
2. *Lancet* 1998: 351: pgs 316-21.
3. *Journal of Clinical Oncology* 1999; 17: pgs: 3396-3402

4. *Proceeding of the American Society of Clinical Oncology* 2000: 19: pg 44
5. *Seminars in Oncology*; 2001 June: 28 (3): pgs 253-259.
6. *New England Journal of Medicine* 2001, July 19: 345(3): pg 207-208.

MBCW Board Member Joins UC Berkeley Steering Committee

Georgie Farren, MD, a member of MBCW Board of Directors and principal co-investigator for The Study of Adolescent Risk Factors and Development of Breast Cancer has been invited to be a member of the steering committee of the University of California Berkeley School of Public Health Center for Disease Prevention and Research Collaborative Project. She will join other distinguished researchers, activists and community representatives in a planning process that will include an international conference and will culminate in an agenda for research needed to identify environmental exposures that are associated with the national and global epidemic of breast cancer in women.



Shakespeare at Stinson

MBCW staff, friends and supporters joined together for a delightful evening of theater at Stinson Beach on September 16. The event was a fundraiser for MBCW. Above attendees participate in a silent auction prior to the play. Many thanks to all of those who came out to join in the fun and frivolity of the "Merry Wives of Windsor." We deeply appreciate your support!

MBCW ECO-WATCH

Continued from page 4

to allow methane to safely dissipate into the air. Work on the north antenna field, from which the money was diverted, will continue at a reduced level and will resume with expected funding in next year's budget.

- *August 20*—High concentrations of the pesticide DDT have been found in sediment in a creek flowing through Hamilton Field to a pond that connects to San Pablo Bay. Another banned pesticide, Chlordane, was found in even higher concentrations in sediment from a city stormwater pipe that deposits into Pacheco Pond. The pond has been the site of mysterious fish deaths, strong chemical odors and a white plume in the past year. Marin County sheriff's divers became ill after entering the pond.

DDT was found at 132 parts per billion from a concrete-lined portion of Pacheco Creek that was cleaned out three years ago by the military. A sediment sample in Pacheco Pond showed nearly 20 parts per billion. The regional water board has set a limit of no more than 7 parts per billion of DDT in dredged bay mud that will be used to cover Hamilton's former runways as part of a planned wetlands restoration project.

- *August 23*—Officials planned a new round of sediment sampling to further investigate high levels of chlordane in the stormwater pipe that empties into Pacheco Pond, which leads to San Pablo Bay. The prospect of further testing at Hamilton remains uncertain. All indications show that the source of the DDT is the military.

- *Sept. 3*—A final environmental clean-up plan for the eastern portions of Hamilton Field, an area slated to become wetlands, is up for public review. A meeting was held on September 4 to detail the plan and solicit public comment. Environmentalists have expressed concern that a portion of the wetlands project may have an undocumented landfill containing toxic substances. A \$102,000 federal archive search failed to turn up any evidence of the disputed landfill and the Army is not planning any environmental testing to check for one.

Next time in Eco-watch—The PG&E (Lindero) site, a 20-acre former coal gas production site in downtown San Rafael between Second and A Streets that is now becoming the home of a new business/office complex.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Through October 21

Point Reyes Art Show:

Listen to the Canary if Her Song Can Still be Heard

Gallery Route One

11101 Highway One, Suite 101

Point Reyes Station

Wednesday through Monday

11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

All proceeds to be donated to

Tomales Bay Canary Project

October 1

Pasta Pomodoro Fundraiser for MBCW

Pasta Pomodoro

Strawberry Square, Mill Valley

\$10

RSVP: 415/256-9011

October 17

5% Day at Wild Oats Market

5% of your grocery bill will be donated to MBCW

Wild Oats Market

222 Greenfield Ave.

San Anselmo

8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Shop for a worthy cause!

October 17

Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood

Sandra Steingraber, author of *Living Downstream*

Book signing and discussion

University of California, Hastings School of Law

200 McAllister St., 2nd floor

San Francisco

Call Kate Silberman, 510/594-9864

November 4

MBCW Benefit Performance featuring

Political Humorist Kate Clinton

Marin Osher Jewish Community Center

San Rafael

5:00 p.m., \$30

Call 415/256-9011

Continued on page 12

REFRAMING BREAST CANCER

Janice Marie Barlow

Breast cancer has been linked in the minds of the public, doctors, and researchers to a population of white, well-educated, women of high socioeconomic status who have deferred childbearing. However, breast cancer affects women of all races and income groups in various stages of their lives. The annual report to the nation on the status of cancer (1973 through 1998) included the following findings:

- Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis among women in all five racial and ethnic groups studied.
- From 1973 to 1998, female breast cancer rates increased by more than 40 percent, from 82.6 per 100,000 women to 118.1 per 100,000 in 1998.
- The increase in black women's breast cancer incidence rate was similar to that of white women from 1979 through 1986 but was larger from 1986 through 1998.
- Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among Hispanic women.
- The breast cancer death rate is highest among black women.

Outside of the United States, breast cancer rates are also rising. The rates are highest in industrialized countries (North America and northern Europe) but are rising all around the globe as countries become more industrialized. In third world countries, a 33 percent increase in breast cancer is expected in the next two decades. (*Seminars in Oncology* 2001 April: 28 (2): pgs 210-216). Breast cancer is not only a local and national problem but a global problem.

Reference:

Journal of the National Cancer Institute 2001 June 6;93(11): 824-842

URGENT ACTION ALERT: Support the School Environmental Protection Act (SEPA)

We may not know exactly what makes a woman develop breast cancer, but we do know that chemical exposures at early ages can spark the growth of cancers that emerge later in life. You can help to make our schools safe by supporting a federal bill that will notify parents about pesticides before they are used in our schools. Please join a growing chorus of environmental, public health and children's advocates in calling on your Congressional Representative to support the School Environmental Protection Act (SEPA).

MARIN BEYOND PESTICIDES— CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Ginger Souders-Mason

Schools are getting the message that parents in the know don't want their children exposed to toxic pesticides on campus. In Marin County, the Marin Office of Education, Kentfield School District—and, soon, the Larkspur schools—will all have in place rules governing the use of pesticides. This is above and beyond what is required by the state's new Healthy Schools Act. As we go to press, the College of Marin Board of Trustees just passed a policy regarding the use of integrated pest management (IPM) on its campuses. This is a great step forward. We look forward to strong procedures that will protect all students, faculty and staff.



The California Department of Pesticide Regulation has a sample policy, modeled after Kentfield and LA Unified and San Francisco School Districts. In July, Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR)—under the Alliance Grant given to Marin County—had a School IPM (integrated pest management) Expo at San Marin High for pesticide applicators and school maintenance personnel, demonstrating safer alternatives to toxic pesticides.

This event occurred just as new research emerged from the University of Washington reporting that all but one preschool child—out of 96 tested—had traces of pesticides in their urine. Children whose parents used pesticides in their gardens had significantly higher chemical concentrations than those who had gardens but did not use any pesticides. No one knows what these chemicals are doing to the bodies of young children now or in the future. We can only look at some of the gross indicators within society today, such as lower test scores, poor classroom behavior, aggression, lack of coping skills and increased numbers of cancers such as leukemia, non-hodgkins lymphoma, brain tumors, and testicular cancer. We do not know if toxic chemicals entering children's bodies are causing such conditions (because there is so little research being done on the environmental contributors to disease) but it certainly cannot be healthy. Join the Pesticide Free Zone Campaign and show your neighbors how you feel by displaying the ladybug sign. Find us on the web at www.pesticidefreezone.org

MARIN BREAST CANCER WATCH WELCOMES NEW EMPLOYEES

Janice Marie Barlow was appointed Interim Executive Director of Marin Breast Cancer Watch in June. She brings a wide-range of experience in community health care and extensive personal involvement in health advocacy, community activism and non-profit organizations. Prior to her appointment, she served on MBCW's board of directors, on the research writing committee and on the environmental task force. Janice earned her BS in nursing from the University of California in San Francisco. She did her graduate work at the University of Washington and is a pediatric nurse practitioner. Her career includes over 25 years experience in providing family-centered preventive health care services to at-risk and underserved multicultural populations in community-based health, developmental and educational organizations.

Adrienne Kolb joined the Marin Breast Cancer Watch staff as Assistant to the Executive Director in June. She manages daily office operations and uses her computer programming skills to help redesign and maintain the Marin Breast Cancer Watch website, www.breastcancerwatch.org. Adrienne is currently attending the College of Marin. Adrienne's great grandmother, grandmother and aunt have all had breast cancer.

Colin Leary is the new Research Assistant on the collaborative MBCW/UCSF adolescent risk factor study. He has previously worked as a chemist and microbiologist for NASA, and is currently studying statistics. He moved to the Bay Area two years ago.

Tom Scott, Communications Director, is MBCW's newest employee. He brings a decade of communication and public affairs experience to the organization. A recent transplant from Washington, D.C., he previously worked as a speech writer and press secretary to U.S. Senator Patty Murray. He was also vice-president of a government affairs consulting firm and has worked on numerous political campaigns.

Cassie Stevenson is Marin Breast Cancer Watch's Events Coordinator. She brings eight years of public relations and event planning skills to MBCW. Cassie's aunt and grandmother have both battled breast cancer and she lost her mother to colon cancer in 1996.



MBCW Staff (L to R) Cassie Stevenson, Colin Leary, Debra McKnight-Higgins, Adrienne Kolb and Joe Klimeck, our research volunteer.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

The "precautionary principle" is a fundamental tenet of public health practice. This principle holds that people have a duty to take anticipatory action to prevent harm. The burden of proof of harmlessness of a chemical lies with the proponents of use of that chemical, not with patients and the general public, and people using a toxic chemical have an obligation to examine a full range of alternatives.

It is interesting to note the similarity of some of these principles to well-accepted medical, public health and bioethical codes. It must also be noted that, in some ways, the application of the precautionary principle could reverse current practices, such as the existing de facto "system" of approving the use of chemicals in commerce and society until they are proven unsafe. This status quo, from an ethical perspective, appears unacceptable when there is serious debate about risks.

For the enormously complex and serious problems that now face the world—global warming, lost of biodiversity, toxins in the environment—science doesn't have all the answers and traditional risk assessment and management may not be up to the job. Given the scope of such problems, they may never be. It is no wonder, then that politicians and activists are insisting on caution first, science second. Actions taken to protect the environment and human health should and must take precedence.

Continued on page 12

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Marin Breast Cancer Watch Mission Statement:

Breast Cancer Watch of Marin is a grassroots organization dedicated to finding the causes and stopping the epidemic of breast cancer. We accomplish our mission through community-based research, education and public policy advocacy with a focus on creating a healthy environment.

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Francine Levien

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Marin Breast Cancer Watch

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**Marin County Study of
Adolescent Risk Factors**
(415) 256-9109

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Thanks are extended to the
following contributors to this
issue: Ginger Souders-
Mason, Janice Marie
Barlow, Judy Davis

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Continued from page 8

November 7

MBCW Wellness and the Environment Lecture
Featuring James Coddington, DMV
The Health of Our Pets
Art & Garden Center
Ross
7:00 p.m.

November 16

CETOS Presents
Jay A. Levy, MD, UCSF
Acclaimed AIDS and cancer researcher
College of Marin, Kentfield Campus
Olney Hall
7:00 p.m.

THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

Continued from page 10

It is interesting to note that the precautionary principle is a matter of law in Germany and Sweden and may soon guide the policy of all Europe: In February 2000, the European Commission outlined when and how it intends to use the precautionary principle. Increasingly, the principle is finding its way into international agreements. It was incorporated for the first time in a fully fledged international treaty last January—namely, *the United Nations Biosafety Protocol* regulating trade in genetically modified products. Gradually it has begun to work its way into U.S. policy.

STOP BREAST CANCER WHERE IT STARTS RESOLUTION

Continued from page 1

activities, to increase screening and treatment and to support the right of all women to compassionate, competent breast health care and the right to a healthy environment in which to live and work; and

WHEREAS, cancers cannot generally be “cured” but can potentially be prevented by eliminating industrial emission of dioxins and exposure to other toxic agents in our air, soil, and water; and

WHEREAS, health and environmental policies should be guided by the “Precautionary Principle,” when the activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if cause and effect relationships are not established with absolute scientific certainty. In this context, the proponent of the activity or substance, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof of harmlessness.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the County of Marin declares the month of October as “Stop Cancer Where it Starts: Beyond Breast Cancer Awareness Month” in order to bring awareness not only to the incidence of and possible cures for breast cancer, but also the environmental links to breast cancer.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Health and Human Services be directed to support community-based breast cancer research, as well as breast cancer education and outreach strategies.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the County of Marin hereby rededicates itself to previously affirmed resolutions as the Dioxin Resolution, the Pesticide Resolution, and the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marin hereby proclaims the month of October, 2001 as “Stop Cancer Where it Starts: Beyond Breast Cancer Awareness Month” and joins in observing the month with appropriate activities.

PASSED AND ADOPTED at a regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marin held this 31st day of July, 2001, by the following vote: AYES: Supervisors Cynthia L. Murray, John B. Kress, Steve Kinsey, Annette Rose, Harold C. Brown, Jr.; NOES: None ABSENT: None.



MarinBreastCancerWatch

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