

## Vitamin D, Breast Cancer and Prevention

Local media have published several articles on vitamin D, breast cancer and prevention in response to the recent publication of “*Vitamin D Receptor Polymorphisms and Breast Cancer Risk in a High Incidence Population: A Pilot Study*” in the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons (JACS)*, which generated intense interest among women living in Marin County. Unfortunately, much of the information in the articles was confusing and in some cases, inaccurate, leaving Marin women wondering if they should, based on the reported findings, take vitamin D to prevent breast cancer and breast cancer recurrence.



### A few facts:

The DNA samples used in the JACS publication were from the first major study to look at the question of why women in Marin County are at high risk for breast cancer which was led by UCSF cancer epidemiologist Margaret Wrench, M.P.H., PhD, Giorgianna Farren, MD and members of Marin Breast Cancer Watch, now called Zero Breast Cancer. The study, *Adolescent Risk Factors and the Development of Breast Cancer in Marin*, was funded by the California Breast Cancer Research Program and published in 2003. The study compared 285 women with breast cancer in Marin with 286 women in Marin without breast cancer. Some 338 women in the study consented to giving bucal cell samples for future research. The cell samples from the 2003 study have been kept frozen and were made available to Dr. Dalessandri and her colleagues at InterGenetics for further analysis. The DNA samples are not, as reported, from the women participating in the current Marin Women’s Study being conducted by the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services.



The study examined the DNA of 164 non-Hispanic, white women living in Marin who were diagnosed with breast cancer between 1997 and 1999. The study’s authors compared their genetic profiles with 174 women in the same study who were breast-cancer-free, matched controls using a risk stratification model that the authors developed. The study found that women, using their model, who were identified as being “at high risk” for breast cancer were 1.9 times more likely to have a specific vitamin D receptor variation than those in the study not identified as being “at high risk”. Interestingly, the percent of breast cancer cases with the variation (29%) was lower than that of the controls (39%).

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The role of the variant in the vitamin D receptor and how it affects the amount of vitamin D in the body is unclear. The variant is known to be associated with differing vitamin D levels, but exactly how it works is not known. At this point in time, it’s a huge leap from the data presented in this study to imply that genetic differences in vitamin D receptors may explain the high incidence of breast cancer here in Marin.

Despite all the publicity on vitamin D and breast cancer, the question remains ... what should women do? Should women increase their intake of vitamin D to reduce their risk of breast cancer or breast cancer recurrence?



zero breast cancer

### Mission Statement

*Our mission is to find the causes of breast cancer through community participation in the research process. We focus on identifying environmental factors and the role they play in the development of breast cancer at all stages of life and across generations.*

#### Founder

Francine Levien  
(1931 – 2001)

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Kim Huff,  
Kimber Communications, Graphic Design

4340 Redwood Highway, Suite C400  
San Rafael, California 94903  
tel: 415-507-1949 fax: 415-507-1645

[info@zerobreastcancer.org](mailto:info@zerobreastcancer.org)  
[www.zerobreastcancer.org](http://www.zerobreastcancer.org)

Please continue to  
support the work of  
**ZERO BREAST CANCER**  
by making a contribution  
using the enclosed envelope.  
*Thank you.*

## ZBC Says Farewell to Flavia Belli and Casandra Aldsworth

Since the last newsletter Flavia Belli, Board Member, and Casandra Aldsworth, Community Outreach and Education Coordinator have departed from Zero Breast Cancer. **Flavia Belli** has been an active member of Zero Breast Cancer and a founding board member since 1995. An early pioneer in the formation of our non-profit organization, then called Marin Breast Cancer Watch, Flavia joined forces with other Marin women affected by breast cancer to ask “Why?” to demand research focused on Marin County’s higher incidence rates, and to bring the community voice to this public health issue. Flavia was part of the research team of the Adolescent Risk Factors Study conducted with Margaret Wrensch at UCSF, a published study (2003) that focused on adolescent exposures as a potential window of susceptibility for future breast cancer risk. With her New York City roots, business acumen and generous spirit, Flavia shared her wisdom and style in guiding many of Zero Breast Cancer’s fundraising events, including the Honor Thy Healer awards and even a Bocce tournament! We all wish Flavia a fond Arrivederci (Farewell) and Grazie – Many Thanks!

Farewell to **Casandra Aldsworth**, MPH, a bright star from the Boston area who joined ZBC in early 2010 as Community Outreach and Education Coordinator for the Bay Area Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Program. Cassie approached her role with solid research skills and a keen enthusiasm for communicating public health messages from the BCERP study. She spearheaded the writing, production, and translations of the BCERP’s *Breast Biologues*, an award-winning video and narrative comic book about breast cancer and the environment. Cassie applied her analytic skills and creativity to every project she undertook, including the formation and development of the Youth Advisory Board for the CYGNET study. Special thanks to Cassie and we wish her our best as she continues in her public health career!

## ZBC Welcomes Alexandra Anderson



**Alexandra (Nikki) Anderson** has joined the Zero Breast Cancer team as the new Community Outreach and Education Coordinator for the Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Program. Prior to joining Zero Breast Cancer, Alexandra served as a Program Assistant at Hollywood, Health & Society, working with the entertainment industry to promote the accuracy of health storylines on television. In addition she was a Research Assistant with USC Annenberg School for

Communication and Journalism’s SOLVE-IT research lab developing computer gaming technology for health education. She earned two bachelor’s degrees, Psychology and Kinesiology, as well as a Master of Public Health degree with an emphasis in Health Policy and Global Health from the University of Southern California. She is excited to utilize her new media skills and passion for community engagement to support the mission of Zero Breast Cancer. She grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and currently lives in Vallejo with her cat, Flash. We welcome Alexandra to our staff!

## Cover Story continued from page 1

The role of vitamin D in relation to breast cancer incidence and outcome is controversial. Evidence from cell studies, animal studies and observational studies has generally supported an association between higher vitamin D intake and lower breast cancer risk, but results have been inconsistent. There is currently an ongoing large prevention trial, VITAL ([www.vitalstudy.org](http://www.vitalstudy.org)), at Harvard, exploring the role vitamin D and omega 3 in the prevention of cancer and cardiovascular disease. Until the results of this trial are available, there will not be a more definitive answer as to whether vitamin D can prevent breast cancer.

The optimal level of vitamin D in one's blood serum for reducing breast cancer risk has yet to be defined. It seems reasonable to follow the total recommended daily vitamin D intake for bone health until further information is available. For women under age 71 it is 600 IU/day. For women older than 71 an intake of 800 IU/day is recommended. We recommend women consult with their physician regarding their vitamin D status and the advisability of taking supplements.

It's very important to continue research into the role of vitamin D and the amount of the vitamin D necessary to achieve a protective benefit against breast cancer and breast cancer recurrence, as well as to explore the many other possible ways to reduce risk and prevent new cases of breast cancer. Prevention research currently receives only a fraction of the funding that other breast cancer research receives. We invite Marin residents to support Zero Breast Cancer's work advocating and fundraising for expanded breast cancer prevention research. Equally important, we need to ensure women of all ages and backgrounds have the necessary information to make informed decisions about reducing their risk of breast cancer. To get involved please visit [ZeroBreastCancer.org](http://ZeroBreastCancer.org).

## Record High Web Views of ZBC/UCTV breast cancer prevention videos

Views of breast cancer prevention and treatment programming on University of California Television, produced by Zero Breast Cancer in partnership with UCSF, BABCERC, and UCSF/SFGH Avon Breast Care Program have surpassed 500,000 *web views*! Ten educational videos that include UCSF and ZBC presentations at the 2009 and 2011 education forums for younger women and the BABCERC toolkit videos— *Breast Biologues* and *Of Mice and Women* – are accessible at [HTTP://UCTV.TV/ZEROBREASTCANCER](http://UCTV.TV/ZEROBREASTCANCER). We invite readers to explore this educational video series from your desktop, I-pad or smart phone.

UCTV broadcasts educational and enrichment programming from the campuses, national laboratories and affiliated institutions of the University of California, reaching 23 million homes nationwide via satellite and public access cable television, and worldwide via live stream, video archives and podcasting at [HTTP://WWW.UCTV.TV](http://WWW.UCTV.TV). Zero Breast Cancer thanks our community education partners and the Avon Foundation, Safeway Foundation, the Marin County Board of Supervisors and NIEHS for their support of these productions. Also, thanks to BABCERC, the UCSF faculty and other presenters who have partnered with ZBC in disseminating evidence-based information on breast cancer prevention and the environment to a diverse and global viewing audience.

## ABOUT VITAMIN D\*

Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that is naturally present in very few foods, and added to others as a dietary supplement. It is also produced endogenously when ultraviolet rays from sunlight strike the skin and make vitamin D. Vitamin D promotes calcium absorption needed for bone growth and bone remodeling by osteoblasts and osteoclasts. Vitamin D also has other roles in the body, including modulation of cell growth, neuromuscular and immune function, and reduction of inflammation. Many genes encoding proteins that regulate cell proliferation, differentiation and apoptosis (cell death) are modulated in part by vitamin D.

## DIETARY SOURCES OF VITAMIN D:

Very few foods in nature contain vitamin D. The flesh of fatty fish (such as salmon, tuna and mackerel) are the best sources. Small amounts of vitamin D are found in beef liver, cheese and egg yolks. All of the US milk supply, including infant formulas, as well as some ready- to- eat breakfast cereals are fortified with vitamin D. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that exclusively and partially breastfed infants receive supplements of 400IU/day of vitamin D shortly after birth until weaning.

## SUN EXPOSURE

Various factors (season, time of day, length of day, body size, skin melanin content and sunscreen ) that affect UV radiation exposure and research to date on the amount of sun exposure needed to maintain adequate vitamin D levels makes it difficult to provide general guidelines. It has been suggested by some vitamin D researchers, for example, that approximately 5-30 minutes of sun exposure between 10am and 3pm at least twice a week to face, arms, legs or back without sunscreen usually lead to sufficient vitamin D synthesis.

\*Information from Vitamin D-Health Professional Fact Sheet, National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplements.

## Message from the Executive Director

Janice Marie Barlow



### Going National. Going Global.

Our community-based prevention model expands to wider communities.

Where does Zero Breast Cancer go next?

This summer the organization's Board unanimously approved extending its commitment to research and community involvement both nationally and globally.

#### Part of an national effort

First steps in this expansive new direction have already taken place. Zero Breast Cancer is increasing its

collaboration with related organizations across the country. Some significant recent examples of our broadening influence include:

- ▶ The Foundation for the National Institutes of Health has invited Zero Breast Cancer to attend the 2nd Collaborative Summit on Breast Cancer Research on November 1-2, 2012. We will join other influential researchers, advocates, industry representatives, funders and scientists to assess the breast cancer landscape and develop individual and collaborative projects to move the field forward.
- ▶ ZBC continues to serve on the Interagency Committee on Breast Cancer and the Environment that is developing and coordinating a strategic federal research agenda on environmental and genetic factors related to breast cancer. ZBC is one of six advocates on the 19 member nationwide committee. The committee, established by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in collaboration with the National Cancer Institute, reviewed all research conducted or supported by federal agencies on environmental exposures and breast cancer. The committee is in the process of creating a report that will include recommendations to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institutes of Health, and other federal agencies on innovative research strategies going forward. The report will be released November 2012.
- ▶ ZBC is co-author of a report, *California Breast Cancer Mapping Project: A Statewide Analysis* which was generated as part of the California Breast Cancer Mapping Project (CBCMP) funded by the California Breast Cancer Research Program from 2009 to 2011 to explore the technical feasibility of mapping areas with elevated rates of breast cancer. The report will enable communities, breast cancer advocates, public health practitioners and other breast cancer stakeholders to identify communities most impacted by breast cancer, explore resource needs and opportunities and raise concerns. The Mapping Project Report will be released November 2012.

#### Part of an international effort

The impact of Zero Breast Cancer's programs is resonating wider than the US. The issue of breast cancer is of global concern. Our 17- year experience in the field has prompted attention from surprising directions.

On September 11, 2012, Janice Barlow, executive director of Zero Breast Cancer, spoke to 25 Avon Global Breast Cancer Clinical Scholars on engaging communities and advocates in research, public health and clinical care.

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### Zero Breast Cancer Redefined

In Spring 2012 Zero Breast Cancer applied for and was awarded a service contract with Taproot, a national pro bono marketing organization. The assignment was to clearly establish and articulate a "brand position" for Zero Breast Cancer.

Taproot's team provided volunteer marketing specialists, researchers, and strategists who audited related cancer prevention groups, conducted interviews, and, after extensive discussions, proposed options for our organization's path going forward.

After due consideration it was unanimously agreed that positioning Zero Breast Cancer as group with a national, even global, presence was our strongest course of action.

Our Taproot partners created a communication program for this new direction, refining the language for speaking to donors, the professional medical community and the local communities, focusing especially on young women and minorities. "This six-month effort," explained Taproot Account Director Tim Scheele, "resulted in guidelines that put Zero Breast Cancer's mission on an even firmer footing for the challenges ahead."

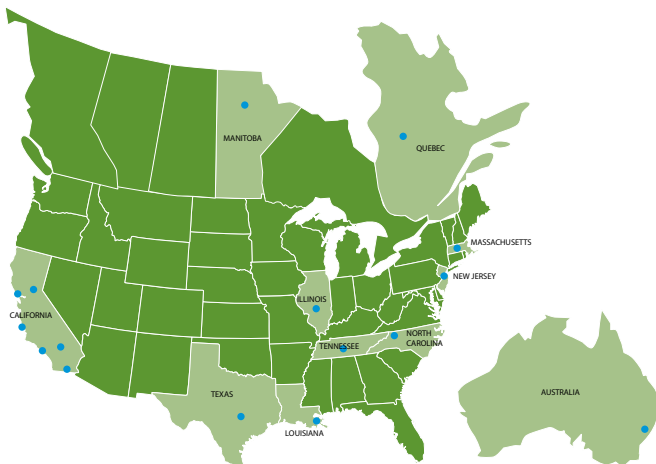
*Going National. Going Global.  
continued from page 4*

On a recent visit to the Buck Institute for Age Research and Dominican University of California, Zero Breast Cancer members met with Cinzia Catalfamo Akbaraly, founder of the Akbaraly Foundation which has invested considerable resources in 4AWOMAN project, designed to fight breast and gynecological cancer in Madagascar. The meeting focused on community-based, participatory research and the benefits of involving women and communities in breast cancer research.

Zero Breast Cancer’s award winning educational tool kit, *The Breast Biologues: a biology dialogue about breast cancer and the environment*, has been viewed 49,313 times on UCTV ([HTTP://UNTV /ZEREBREASTCANCER](http://untv/zerebreastcancer)) which has a potential international and national audience of 4 million. On Vimeo, an international website, the tool kit has been viewed by 900 individuals living in 95 different countries. Large orders (over 100 copies) of the kit have been requested and sent to school districts as far away as Puerto Rico and the Philippines.

Zero Breast Cancer’s Adolescent Peer Education Tool Kit has been used as a model to help develop youth education programs in the Bay Area, throughout the United States and Canada, and as far away as New South Wales, Australia.

We would not be able to have expanded our influence without the ongoing support of friends, donors, businesses and foundations. Your contributions support scientific research into the environmental causes of breast cancer, breast cancer prevention education and translation of breast cancer research findings in Marin, the Bay Area and beyond.



This map represents the geographical reach of Zero Breast Cancer’s Adolescent Peer Education Program

**Breast Density:  
A Woman’s Right to Know?**

*Janice Marie Barlow*

Health providers in California will soon have to tell a woman, in writing, if her mammogram reveals she has dense breasts. They will have to explain that breast density is associated with higher risk of breast cancer, that dense breasts make cancers harder to detect with mammography and that additional screening through ultrasound or MRI may be recommended. Both dense breast tissue and a tumor appear white on a mammogram, making it difficult sometimes to see tumors, particularly in young women, who normally have dense breasts.

The new law, SB 1538 (authored by Senator Joe Simitian D-Palo Alto) goes into effect April 1, 2013 and follows similar statutes that have passed in Connecticut, Texas, Virginia and New York. The American College of Radiology (ACR) anticipates 13 other states will introduce dense breast bills this year.

Not unlike the US Prevention Task Force’s recommendation to begin routine breast cancer screening at age 50, rather than 40, the legislation has stirred up a hornet’s nest of controversy with doctors, researchers, legislators, breast cancer advocates and patients weighing in on the potential benefits of telling women whether or not they have dense breasts, against the potential risks.

Those opposed to the legislation are concerned that such laws may complicate women’s screening decisions, lead to confusion about screening follow-up, increase the number of false positive findings (false alarms) and create additional health care costs. Another major concern is that, until recently, there was no standardized, automated method for measuring mammographic density. Breast density scores often vary from doctor to doctor or practice to practice making interpretation very subjective. Finally, breast density is not well understood. There are many unanswered questions. Why are there differences in breast density? What causes these differences? Why does density change over time? Why does it increase breast cancer risk? Is breast density modifiable? How can density be measured reliably?

Those in favor of the legislation argue that women have a “right-to-know” their breast density despite all these uncertainties. Breast density is one of the strongest risk factors for breast cancer. Most studies have indicated a more than four-fold increase in risk among women with dense breasts, a magnitude that sets breast density apart from other breast cancer risk factors. Only age and mutations of the BRCA gene have a bigger influence on breast cancer risk

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## ZBC Convenes Community Advisory Group for proposed Latina Study



In continued collaboration with UCSF cultural anthropologist Nancy Burke, PhD and research associate Claudia Guerra, MSW, Zero Breast Cancer and this research team met on September 12th with several Marin and Bay Area women's health and policy leaders interested in environmental factors and breast cancer risk in Marin Latina immigrants. This group of advisors include Xóchitl Castañeda, Director – Health Initiative of the Americas, UC Berkeley School of Public Health; Roccio (Cio) Hernandez, MS, MFT, Marin County DHHS Prevention Hub and Bi-National Health Week Program Coordinator; Norma Ledezma, Breast Health Educator & Health Care Interpreter – Marin Community Clinics; Rochelle Ereman, MPH, Director of Marin County DHHS Department of Epidemiology & Principal Investigator – Marin Women's Study on Breast Cancer; Douglas Mundo, Director, Canal Welcome Center;

David Escobar, Office of Marin County Supervisor Steve Kinsey; and Francine Halberg, MD, Marin Specialty Care, and Marin Women's Study Steering Committee. Fern Orenstein participated on behalf of the Zero Breast Cancer Board of Directors.

Janice Barlow and Susan Schwartz reported on ZBC's education programs with Latinas, community needs identified at ZBC's 2010 Breast Cancer Research and Latinas forum, and issues raised concerning the impact of the environment at the 2012 National Latino Cancer Summit. Dr. Burke presented her research interests in studying how changes in physical, social and cultural environments may contribute to breast cancer risk in Latinas. Ms. Guerra informed advisors about her work as research associate in multiple bi-cultural health studies at UCSF. Rochelle Ereman, MPH reviewed the latest breast cancer incidence rates in Latina women in Marin. Community advisors shared their perspectives on local Hispanic demography and how immigration related factors may play a role in health outcomes, including breast cancer, in the Hispanic (Latina) population. Studies indicate that the longer a Latina woman resides in the U.S. the greater her risk of breast cancer. Zero Breast Cancer thanks this Advisory Board for sharing their experience, community wisdom and interest in guiding breast cancer research in Marin that may lead to the discovery of prevention strategies for Latinas.

### *Breast Density: A Woman's Right to Know? continued from page 5*

While many of the traditional risk factors for breast cancer, such as age and family history, cannot be easily modified, other risk factors, such as lack of physical activity, weight for body size, alcohol consumption and use of hormone replacement therapy are considered modifiable.

New research has suggested that breast density is at least potentially modifiable. In a new study using data from the Women's Health Initiative, researchers found that, in mammograms done a year apart, breast density went up for 85 % of the women taking hormone replacement therapy (estrogen and progestin HRT) and this increase in density might explain the increased breast cancer risk in that group. This suggests that knowing one's breast density could be important to a woman in deciding whether to use HRT for relief of hot flashes or other menopausal symptoms. If a woman knew she had dense breasts, she might be more likely to decide not to take HRT.

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#### **What is Breast Density?**

The breast contains ducts, glands, fibrous connective tissue and fatty tissue. A breast that is considered dense has more fibrous, connective tissue and less fatty tissue, while a very low density breast contain almost all fatty tissue. Virtually, all women start out with very dense breast tissue. Over time this changes and, as a woman ages, her breasts typically become more fatty and less dense. However, there are some women whose breasts remain dense, even after menopause.

#### **How is Breast Density Measured?**

Breast density can only be determined by looking at a mammogram of a woman's breasts. (A system called BI-RADS is used to report density which is ranked from 1 (least dense) to 4 (most dense) .

#### **What do we know about breast density and breast cancer risk?**

Breast density is one of the strongest risk factors for breast cancer.

The reasons for breast cancer density being such a strong risk factor for breast cancer are not well understood.

Women at the high end of breast density have a 10 year breast cancer risk 4 to 6 times greater than that of same-aged women at the low end of breast density

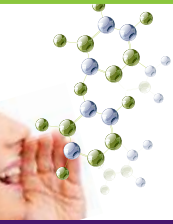
## Breast Cancer and the Environment Breast Cancer Research Program's Annual Scientific Meeting

The Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Program (BCERP) is conducting epidemiologic and biologic studies investigating the influence of Extended Environmental Exposures on breast cancer risk throughout the lifespan. Targeted for study are multiple "windows of susceptibility" that may represent periods of particular vulnerability to specific chemical, dietary, or psychosocial stresses. This year's scientific program is organized around these critical periods and includes presentations on the in utero, puberty, pregnancy, and menopause periods and will end with a session on the translation of research into public policy. Community participation and advocacy concerns will continue to be integrated into the program.


A special interactive session on Tuesday evening, November 13, on communicating science, will be presented by the Center for Communicating Science, Stony Brook University.

The audience for the meeting is expected to be BCERP members; scientists in the area of breast cancer and mammary biology, environmental epidemiology or children's health; and community, environmental health, and breast cancer advocates.

The conference is free and open to the public. Registration is required. Please register by November 9th at [WWW.BCERP.ORG/2012MEETING](http://WWW.BCERP.ORG/2012MEETING).



**Communication** is not something extra you add on to science; it is the essence of science—Alan Alda




### Distilling Your Message

#### An Interactive Presentation on Communicating Science

The Center for Communicating Science (CCS) at Stony Brook University will present general principles in how to craft short, clear, conversational statements about what you do and why it matters. The session will include a short video hosted by Alan Alda, an interactive power point presentation, and discussion on how to translate technical materials for your audience.

CCS helps scientists and health professionals learn to communicate about their work clearly, vividly and engagingly with the public, public officials, the media, funders, investors and colleagues in other disciplines.



Tuesday, November 13, 2012

6:30 pm to 8:00 pm


Hilton San Francisco Financial District  
750 Kearney Street, San Francisco, CA 94108

Sponsored by the Breast Cancer and the Environmental Research Program (BCERP) as part of BCERP's annual scientific meeting. Information about BCERP and the meeting can be found at [www.bcerp.org](http://www.bcerp.org)

Funded by: National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the National Cancer Institute, National Institute of Health Sciences, and the Avon Foundation

Facilitated by BCERP representatives Janice Barlow, Zero Breast Cancer (COTC), and Karen Miller, Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition (CP)

This presentation is free and open to the public.  
Space is limited and advance registration is required.



Register by November 9th at [www.bcerp.org/2012 mtg](http://www.bcerp.org/2012 mtg).

For more information call 415-514-8183 or email [info@bcerp.org](mailto:info@bcerp.org)

### *Breast Density: A Woman's Right to Know? continued from page 6*

How do I personally feel on this issue? I feel women have a right to know all of their medical information. It is part of empowering women to use information to make informed personal health and lifestyle decisions. I feel, as a society, we have a responsibility to provide equitable access to the potential benefits of breast cancer research. Sharing information about breast density with all women, not only disseminates knowledge that can inform personal decision making, but it also addresses disparities in access to knowledge.

It is time to move away from an expert driven approach to health care, which has historically supported the returning of medical information to patients only when the health significance of the information was known and certain, to a more prevention-oriented approach, which emphasizes an individual's right to know and recognizes the potential of the information to inform current and future decision-making.

*How do you feel?*

## ZBC Presents Breast Biologues at National Latino Cancer Summit

More than 200 attendees gathered for the 3rd Bi-Annual National Latino Cancer Summit: Focus on the Environment from Science to Social Justice on July 23-25th, 2012 at the UCSF Mission Bay conference center. Participants included researchers, community organizations, students and health promoters (promotoras) from California, the western states and other locales - the majority of whom were Hispanic/Latino. Zero Breast Cancer and BABCERC's **Breast Biologues\***, an animated video biology dialogue on breast cancer and the environment, was featured at the opening session and also in a special panel convened to consider exposures to toxins and other chemicals and cancer risk in the Latino population. Conference organizer Ysabel Duron, founder of Latinas Contra Cancer, prompted participants to consider the emerging paradigm of windows of susceptibility and cancer etiology in relation to neighborhood, diet, social factors, and occupational and environmental exposures relevant to Latinos.

Keynote speaker Dr. Carlos Betancourt, director of the National Cancer Institute of Mexico (INCAN), reported that breast cancer mortality has increased dramatically for younger Mexican women over the past 20 years, and that INCAN aims to decrease the rates of advanced stage breast cancer through research, education outreach and infrastructure expansion. He stressed the need for bi-national collaborative studies to share data, monitor risk factors, and partner on opportunities for intervention. According to Dr. Betancourt, "50 million US residents have Latino origins. If INCAN and the US join forces in cancer prevention research, we could potentially prevent 40% of all incidence." Other speakers called for more studies on environmental exposures specific to gender, race, ethnicity and cultural influences, including Latinos.

Gwen Collman, PhD, Director of Extramural Research and Training – National Institute of Environmental Health



Annette Aguilera, Susan Schwartz,  
Ysabel Duron & Isabella Molfino



Sciences, and Dr. Robert Croyle from the National Cancer Institute spoke of the need for research on environmental exposure assessments and evidence based interventions. According to Dr. Croyle, there are more than 100 Spanish language resources at NCI to meet the health information needs of the country's fastest growing demographic.

Presenting on behalf of Zero Breast Cancer and the BABCERC **Breast Biologues** producers, ZBC Education Director Susan Schwartz guided conference participants through a tour of the Breast Biologues video and English/Spanish language narrative comic books. ZBC received enthusiastic comments from health educators who plan to use the tool kit to facilitate better understanding of the biology of the breast and how specific exposures at critical windows in breast development might affect future breast cancer risk.

Since the first National Latino Cancer Summit in 2008, Zero Breast Cancer has presented bi-lingual education posters and projects and we have involved Latina youth and advocates in this formative learning opportunity. CYGNET study mentor-leader Annette Aguilera, a junior at Novato High School, reflected on her experience at the 2012 conference: "I gained so much knowledge it is astounding – I learned about the connection between cancer and pesticides, and how important it is to take action. I can now teach others about this topic and give them tips to reduce their exposures to pesticides and other carcinogens." Annette and fellow CYGNET mentor-leader Isabella Molfino, a junior at Oakland Technical High School, assisted ZBC in disseminating bi-lingual educational materials. ZBC wishes to thank Ysabel Duron and Latinas Contra Cancer for providing this educational opportunity for our youth advisors, and for shining the spotlight on the role of the environment at this year's National Latino Cancer year's summit.

*\*The Breast Biologues is a 15-minute video animation with a science-based storyline that explains how the normal breast develops and how exposures to potential cancer-causing chemicals at specific points during development might influence future breast cancer risk. To place an order for this complimentary education toolkit (video and narrative comic book) join the e-mail list at: [zerobreastcancer.org/survey](http://zerobreastcancer.org/survey)*



## Zero Breast Cancer Benefits from Avon Walk for Breast Cancer: San Francisco

The 10th annual Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, San Francisco, was held on July 7-8, 2012 and raised \$4.8 million to support breast cancer research and access to care. Zero Breast Cancer was one of ten Bay Area breast cancer organizations and research institutions to directly benefit from the funds raised by the walkers. At the closing ceremony, executive director Janice Barlow and Danielle Detrick from Zero Breast Cancer accepted a grant award check for \$125,000 from the Avon Foundation for Women, along with other breast cancer organizations that reach medically underserved women, and research institutions. According to Barlow, "Funding from the Avon Foundation for Women supports Zero Breast Cancer's community research collaborations both locally and nationally and enables our organization to share scientific and environmental research results through model prevention education programs for adolescents, younger women, healthcare providers and diverse communities in the Bay Area and beyond." Lis Fuchs, a 10-year breast cancer survivor from Mill Valley, CA, spoke at the closing ceremony about her battle with breast cancer and what motivated her to participate in this walk. "I truly believe that we are nearing the tipping point in our fight against cancer and that each of us has played a role in moving us toward a world without the disease. I plan to be here to see that world. And I really can't wait."



## Racing for Research 2012

Zero Breast Cancer held our 5th annual *Racing for Research* event on August 4, 2012. We had a record turnout this year and everyone had a great time. Thank you to Mt. Vernon Winery, Mario Andretti Winery and Race Sonoma for donating the grand prizes. All of the proceeds from the event help support our breast cancer prevention and educational programs. We are incredibly honored to have the opportunity each year to partner with Sonoma Raceway and the Simraceway Performance Karting Center.

**DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO JOIN US IN 2013!**



Jeff from Simeraceway Performance Karting Center instructs future racers on track safety and etiquette



Drivers prepare to race the lightning-quick karting track



Dustin Carpenter and Drew Youngs in front of the signal flags



David Schao gives a pep talk to Rebecca Yeh before she takes off around the track

## Local Leaders and Healers celebrated at 13th annual Honor Thy Healer Awards Program

Zero Breast Cancer honored eight individuals and two organizations for their contributions to advancing our understanding of breast cancer and the healing process, and for leadership in improving the health of our communities. Five awards were presented at the **13th Annual Honor Thy Healer** program on Thursday, May 10, 2012, at the Mill Valley Community Center. Two hundred guests gathered for the dinner and awards program that featured the remarkable contributions of a medical oncologist, a team of university anthropological researchers, a children's book author, a pioneering pharmaceutical company, and environmental health leaders from the nation's largest integrated healthcare delivery system.

Honorary Chair and journalist Paul Liberatore spoke about his work as a peer support facilitator for couples facing cancer and serious illnesses. Zero Breast Cancer executive director Janice Barlow welcomed guests and highlighted the organization's research partnerships and progress. Attendees included business and professional leaders, researchers, advocates, and honoree supporters who viewed videos about each honoree's unique story.

The 2012 **Healing Professional** honoree was **Jennifer Lucas, MD**, a medical oncologist with **Marin Specialty Care**, affiliated with Marin General Hospital. Dr. Lucas was recognized for her clinical expertise and compassionate care of women with breast cancer.

The 2012 **Hal Brown Shining Star** award was presented by Supervisor Susan Adams to **Mark Wood**, Vice President of **BioMarin Pharmaceutical Inc.**, who accepted the award on behalf of this Marin-based global company that is developing

innovative bio-pharmaceuticals for serious diseases and medical conditions including breast cancer.

The 2012 **Community Breast Cancer Research** honorees were medical anthropologist **Nancy Burke, PhD**, and **Claudia Guerra MSW**, from UCSF and the Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, for collaboration with ZBC on research and education programs for Latinas and younger women.

The 2012 **Francine Levien Activist** award was presented to the

**Kaiser Permanente Environmental Stewardship Program** for promoting healthier communities through safer chemical use and eco-sustainable practices in the healthcare environment. Accepting the award on behalf of Kaiser Permanente San Rafael were **Bria Schlottman, MBA** and **Nan Moon MPH**. **Joe Bialowitz, M.S.**, accepted the award on behalf of Kaiser regional V-P **Kathy Gerwig** and spoke about Rachel Carson's living legacy.

The 2012 **Healing Partner** award was presented to **Sue Glader** who survived breast cancer as a young mother and authored the award-winning book *Nowhere Hair*, a creative healing aid that helps children and parents to cope with cancer.

Zero Breast Cancer thanks all of the sponsors, donors and volunteers who helped to produce this year's program, including major sponsors Merrill Lynch Wealth Management, Marin Specialty Care, Brayton Purcell LLP, Mechanics Bank, Seadrift Co. Realtors and The Big Picture. The evening's program included dinner by Insalata's and a grand raffle luxury travel prize donated by Andavo Travel. Proceeds from the Honor Thy Healer program and raffle support Zero Breast Cancer's community research, education and outreach programs.

*Do you have a suggestion for the 2013 Honor Thy Healer Awards Program? Please contact [info@zerobreastcancer.org](mailto:info@zerobreastcancer.org)*



*Honor Thy Healer Honorees: Back row: Joe Bialowitz, Bria Schlottman, Nan Moon, Mark Wood and Paul Liberatore (not shown: Claudia Guerra)*

*front row - Nancy Burke, (Jeanne Hernandez) Jennifer Lucas, Sue Glader*



*Dr. Jennifer Lucas, Healing Professional, with Katie Beacock*



*Honorary Chair Paul Liberatore*



*Connie Goldsmith & Sue Glader, Healing Partner Award*



*Claudia Guerra & Nancy Burke, Community Research Award*

### Additional Honor Thy Healer 2012 Sponsors and Donors (since Spring 2012 newsletter):

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## Call for Nominations for 2013 HONOR THY HEALER AWARDS

Do you know a special individual who has made a difference in the life of someone affected by breast cancer? Is there an individual, group or business in our community that is working to improve the public's health? Do you know of a researcher who is making huge strides in the field of breast cancer and the environment and is involving the community in the research process? Zero Breast Cancer (ZBC) would like to hear from you!

ZBC invites you to submit your nomination for any of the following awards that will be presented at the May 9, 2013 Honor Thy Healer Awards Program at the Mill Valley Community Center.

*The five distinct award categories include:*

**HEALING PROFESSIONAL** – a distinguished healthcare provider (medical, clinical and/or complementary care) who treats persons with breast cancer

**HEALING PARTNER** – an exceptional individual who has supported a friend or family member through their journey with breast cancer, or who has created a program that supports those affected by breast cancer

**COMMUNITY BREAST CANCER RESEARCHER** – a research scientist or team of researchers who collaborate with the community in the process of discovering unique environmental factors that may play a role in breast cancer

**HAL BROWN SHINING STAR AWARD** – recognizes the leadership of individuals, businesses, non-profits and healthcare organizations who are working to improve the community's health and who support Zero Breast Cancer's mission

**FRANCINE LEVIEN ACTIVIST AWARD** – an honor presented to an individual or business, or a community health or environmental activist, who embodies the namesake and spirit of Zero Breast Cancer's founder

Nominations should be e-mailed to Zero Breast Cancer by January 31, 2013 to [info@zerobreastcancer.org](mailto:info@zerobreastcancer.org). Please indicate the award category for the nomination, name and contact information for both the nominator and the nominee, and a brief explanation about why you think the nominee should receive the award. Honorees will be selected by the 2013 ZBC Honor Thy Healer Program Committee. You will be contacted by February 2013 to confirm if your nomination is selected. ZBC invites all nominators to attend this inspiring awards program.

**Contact [info@zerobreastcancer.org](mailto:info@zerobreastcancer.org) and type Honor Thy Healer 2013 in the subject line. Save the Date of May 9, 2013 for the Honor thy Healer Awards Program.**

## ZBC's Travelling Hat Collection continues to honor Roni Peskin Mentzer



*Roni Peskin Mentzer models her Plexus hat*

The collection of 38 hand-crafted hats, created in honor of ZBC emeritus board member Roni Peskin Mentzer by her fellow Plexus Art Group artists, was featured in a *Hats Stand for Hope* 2012 Exhibit of Plexus Hats (#2) on May 13, 2012 at the Bekris Gallery in San Francisco.

This "derby day" themed gathering was designed to raise funds for Dr. Hope Rugo's breast cancer research at UCSF. Joining Roni at this celebratory benefit for her physician were members of the ZBC Board and staff as well as fellow Plexus artists.

In a subsequent Marin venue: Elise Cheval, Plexus hat artist, exhibited several of the ZBC-Plexus Hats made from recycled plastic on June 16, 2012 at a "Trashion Show" organized with local artists. This San Rafael ecology oriented event, part of the *Project Green Runway* initiative founded by Elise, reached 100 local youth and adults interested in recycling and environmental sustainability, and included media outreach in Marin, Los Angeles & New York.

The hats were also featured in the film "*Mondays at Racine*" produced by Cynthia Wade and Robin Honan, which has appeared in several film festivals and was selected to be shown at the *Mill Valley Film Festival* in October 2012.

Plans are underway for "the hats" to travel for a special exhibit next year at the Nathan D. Rosen Museum Gallery of the Adolph & Rose Levis JCC in Boca Raton, Florida in fall 2013. The hat collection is available to be loaned for shows or exhibits and the public is invited to stop by Zero Breast Cancer to see these unique works of art.

## Pedaling for Prevention: Alex Leason Bikes 3,767 Miles for ZBC

Alex Leason was 16 years old when his mother, who lives in Mill Valley, was diagnosed with breast cancer five years ago. “She went through chemo, and is doing great now,” reports her son. But the experience inspired Alex to do something to help the cause. On August 11, Alex returned home from a 3,767-mile-long “TransAmerica Bike Ride,” to raise awareness and funds for Zero Breast Cancer (ZBC). To date, Alex has raised \$2,600 toward his \$5,000 goal.

*“It’s crazy how nice people are.”*

–Alex Leason

A biology major and pre-med student at Sonoma State University, Alex says, “Since I’m interested in medicine and research, I wanted to help a prevention and research group. ZBC does both, so it’s a win-win.” To map the trip from San Francisco to Yorktown, Virginia – by way of America’s Heartland – Alex turned to

the Adventure Cycling Association (ACA), which provides cyclists with maps of safe, scenic routes, plus information on camping, food, and other resources.

Boiling hot weather, gas station meals, and a shortage of baths and showers weren’t the only challenges, said Alex, recalling the bike trip’s literally bumpy start. First, one of Alex’s two original cycling partners had to back out of the trip. Then, when Alex and his second cycling buddy, Bryan Rengel, were barely 15 miles into the ride, Bryan crashed, breaking his clavicle in three places. (“Bryan’s OK now, but he was bummed” about withdrawing from the adventure, says Alex.)

After a 10-day delay, through the ACA Alex found a new cycling partner, 23-year-old Arthur Luchowski of Philadelphia. “We met on Saturday, and took off on Sunday, June 3,” says Alex. Alex hauled a Bob Yak trailer and Arthur a rear pannier set-up loaded with camping gear and supplies, weighing about 50 pounds. Alex flew a ZBC flag on his trailer, wore a bike jersey with the ZBC logo, and distributed flyers about his fundraising project.

“We averaged 80 miles a day, and rested one day a week,” says Alex. Team ZBC fell into a routine of cycling all day, stopping to check out the ACA’s recommendations for sightseeing, food, and lodging. The cyclists usually camped overnight or stayed in churches or small hotels. Occasionally, the cyclists were invited into people’s homes to shower or rest overnight – something that surprised Alex.

“In small towns, people who may only have a mobile home or a car that barely gets them to work, offered us dinner and a shower,” says Alex. “That’s the biggest thing I learned – the generosity and hospitality of people. It’s crazy how nice people are. Churches welcome cyclists, so we stayed in a few churches, and at volunteer fire departments. But there were definitely some nights where we’d roll into town and not know where we were spending night.”

Food was less of a problem. “I’m the king of gas station dinners – beef jerky, ice cream bars, nuts, and energy drinks in the morning,” laughs

Alex. “We’d sometimes go to restaurants, where we’d plan our day, but we’d always be very smelly and overstay our welcome.”

The cross-country trip opened Alex’s eyes culturally. “I saw different economies, heard how conversations changed according to the regions, the harvest,



*Alex Leason’s cross-country Pedaling for Prevention adventure took two months to complete.*

and the weather. Harvest came early because of the drought,” he reports. “In Kentucky and West Virginia, I saw how coal mines were being shut down, and people were getting laid off. You can’t understand different people, in different regions, without going there.” To record his observations, he made notes in a handbook, usually at night in his tent. “Now I have to dictate them into my online blog,” he says. Alex took hundreds of photos, too.

The toughest part of the ride? “Nevada and Eastern Kansas were very monotonous – deserts and hay fields for miles. Kansas was 105 degrees, with hayfields that were dry to the bone. Seeing green in Missouri was something else – just knowing there was water around was a relief. Kentucky had some gnarly hills. Colorado had the highest mountains, but the actual grade was less steep. We had some beautiful cycling in Utah’s national parks – Bryce Canyon, Grand Staircase-Escalante and Capital Reef. But the most beautiful riding was in Colorado, where we rode through the ‘Fourteeners’ – mountains over 14,000 feet. It was just beautiful.”

They met other cyclists along the route, including two brothers who traveled with them from Kentucky to Yorktown, VA, near Williamsburg, where they finished their journey at the Victory Monument, a landmark commemorating the Revolutionary War. Alex shipped his bike home to California and took the Mega Bus to D.C. and New York to see the sights, flying home in early August. And in case you’re wondering: Alex lost only 10 pounds on the trip, noting, “I think all those gas station ice cream bars kept the weight on!”

Despite the heat, hard hills, and endless haystacks, Alex’s Pedaling for Prevention adventure had a life-changing impact. “If you have the time, I highly recommend the trip. Breast cancer, any kind of cancer, affects everyone. And I’m still fundraising for ZBC!”

**To donate to Pedaling for Prevention, and read Alex’s blog about the trip, visit <http://pedalingforprevention.wordpress.com/>**

The 10th Anniversary Dipsea Hike for Zero Breast Cancer was held on Saturday, September 22nd. A record breaking number of 450 participants consisting of runners, hikers and teams came out to support Zero Breast Cancer in this year's event, raising \$50,000 to support breast cancer research and education.

10TH ANNIVERSARY  
**DIPSEA**  
*Hike for*  
 zero breast cancer



The weather was beautiful and sunny on Mt. Tamalpais and the post-hike picnic was filled with music from Piko's Ukulele Players and Jazz for Sale. Plenty of food, complimentary massages and event sponsors met the participants as they completed the 6-mile course starting and ending in Old Mill Park.

View photos from the event on our facebook page:  
[www.facebook.com/DipseaHikeForZeroBreastCancer](http://www.facebook.com/DipseaHikeForZeroBreastCancer)

Thanks to all the teams, participants and generous sponsors of the 10th Anniversary Dipsea Hike for Zero Breast Cancer! With your help we reached thousands about the risk reducing impact of physical activity and we were able to significantly exceed our original \$20,000 goal, raising vitally needed funds for prevention research and education. We want to acknowledge the Dipsea Hike for Zero Breast Cancer founders, Annie Fox, Jerry Leith, Chris Stewart and our event partners, Tamalpa Runners. Thanks also to Hannah Doress Events for exceptional promotional services for Dipsea Hike 2011 and 2012. See you out on the trail next Fall.

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Executive Director Janice Barlow addressing the record breaking crowd



Charlotte Kobayashi, Hannah Doress, Annie Speigelman and Rick Brandon

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## upcoming events

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### October 7 & 10, 2012

**Documentary: *Mondays at Racine***  
Mill Valley Film Festival  
Sunday, October 7 – 2:30pm  
Wednesday, October 10 – 6:00pm  
Check with Mill Valley Film Festival  
For exact times and locations

### November 13, 2012

**Distilling Your Message**  
**An Interactive Presentation on**  
**Communicating Science**  
6:30pm – 8:00pm  
Hilton San Francisco Financial District  
750 Kearney Street, San Francisco, CA  
Free and open to the public.  
Registration required. Register by November 9th  
[www.bcerp.org/2012meeting](http://www.bcerp.org/2012meeting)

### November 15-16, 2012

**Breast Cancer and the Environment**  
**Breast Cancer Research Program**  
**Extended Environmental Exposures**  
**Annual Meeting**  
*Windows of Susceptibility*  
Hilton San Francisco Financial District  
750 Kearney Street, San Francisco, CA  
Free and open to the public.  
Registration required. Register by November 9th  
[www.bcerp.org/2012meeting](http://www.bcerp.org/2012meeting)

### May 9, 2013 – Save the Date!

**14th Annual Honor Thy Healer Award Program**  
Mill Valley Community Center

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