



Breast Cancer Support Inc.

Newsletter

December 2011

Report from the Chair



I am writing this on a sunny summer's day two weeks before Christmas, and reflecting on how eventful the past couple of months have been. A month ago I had just arrived in Taiwan to attend the 16th Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support Conference (RRI), for which I had prepared a poster on the topic 'Exploring bicultural and multicultural Models of support for women with breast cancer in Aotearoa New Zealand' with input from BCS committee member Misha Crosbie. I don't have words to describe being at the conference – it was inspiring, humbling, overwhelming – all these things yet so much more. I am still getting to grips with the wealth of experiences and information it presented, and I look forward to sharing more of these with you over the coming months.



I was one of four Kiwi delegates at RRI, together with Sue Ellis and Dr Chris Walsh from BCAC, and Alice Lee from the Waikato Breast Cancer Trust. More than 700 delegates gathered from over 30 countries – from Australia to Zambia – and travelled from as far afield as Bermuda (38 hours!) and Sweden.

The conference theme, 'Reach Towards a New Horizon', aimed to bring together Western and Eastern approaches to breast cancer management and support in order to improve quality of life for breast cancer survivors overall. In addition to a Pre-conference on cancer-related fatigue and peer support workshops, the 3-day conference covered Impact, Care, and Survivorship from the perspectives of health professionals, support providers, and survivors; and a cooking competition focused on nutritional support during cancer treatment.



While spoken language was frequently a barrier, a smile, bow, hug, or gift of a business card and brochure, spoke volumes. Many delegates liked the C.S. Lewis quote on the front of the BCS brochure; and the message I brought home with me was that BCS is so much more than simply a local organisation in New Zealand – it is part of an international community of support for women who have experienced breast cancer, and that community supports us too.

A few days after my return, I was privileged to join 20 other women from BCS groups on The Nurturing Journey Retreat at the St Francis Retreat Centre. Many of those attending were in the early stages of their breast cancer journey, still grappling with the maelstrom of diagnosis and treatment. It was wonderful to experience the positive difference those two days made in each woman's life, and the supportive and loving atmosphere of the retreat has continued through emails and personal contacts since. My heartfelt thanks to Misha and SoulPath Journeys for being so passionate about making this experience available to BCS, and I hope that it will be a regular event on the BCS calendar in future.

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BCS gratefully acknowledges the support of our primary funders and sponsors, the NZ Lottery Grants Board, COGS, the ASB Community Trust, the Guardian Trust, and Zeald.com. We also thank the team at Alpha Copy Centre for their support of BCS and to Zonta for keeping us well supplied with the 'moon cushions' that are of such comfort to our ladies.

November brought the good news that the Community Organisations Grants Scheme (COGS) and Lottery Grants Board have granted us funding towards our administration and running costs for 2012, as well as towards two new groups – one in the Onehunga/Mangere Bridge area, and a young women's group. I am sure you join me in thanking Jane Bissell for her expertise and dedication in preparing our funding applications. They claim a lot of her time and attention each year, but without this funding BCS could not provide the range of services that it does.

In recent years BCS has received support from author Pat Donovan through sales of her book *The Dreaded Diagnosis*. Many of you have enjoyed Pat's witty, quirky poems about her breast cancer journey. She has single-handedly raised over \$600 for BCS, for which we are enormously grateful, and is now moving on to other projects. Thank you, Pat, for your support: we wish you well, and hope that we shall keep in touch.

The Breast Friends groups have continued to provide both existing and new members with ongoing support and contact, and my thanks to all our dedicated co-ordinators and their deputies for the many hours of work they do to ensure women find a place of welcome, acceptance and sharing each month. Behind the scenes, the group statistics and news you send in each month are vitally important in compiling our funding applications and accountability reports, as evidence that we are fulfilling our obligations to our members, funders and sponsors. Please keep sending them in!

It just remains for me to wish you all every blessing for Christmas, and a happy new year. I hope I'll see many of you at the BCS Social Walk on 21 January and the Mad Hatter's Tea Party in March – see page 6 or our website for details and updates.

Deirdre Parr

Recipe for an anti-oxidant drink ...

A SIMPLE BEVERAGE OF LEMON AND OLIVE OIL

Deirdre Parr writes about Esther Sant, Maltese delegate from the Action for Breast Cancer Foundation, Malta (www.actionforbreastcancer.com) whips up an antioxidant treat at the 16th Reach to Recovery International Breast Cancer Support conference in Taiwan.

'If life gives you lemons, make lemonade!'

Esther Sant was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2000 at age 36, and is co-founder of the Action for Breast Cancer Foundation in the Mediterranean island nation of Malta. I think she represented the smallest country at the RRI conference, although that distinction possibly belonged to Bermuda.

At the lunch symposium on global cuisines, Esther presented the following recipe for a very simple antioxidant tonic made of ingredients that are not only very Mediterranean, but are found in most New Zealand kitchens. They also cost a lot less than many antioxidant products sold commercially. I haven't tried it yet myself, but it's definitely among my New Year's resolutions to help me recover from the excesses of Christmas! Esther did recommend using organic produce for her recipe:

Ingredients

1 whole lemon, washed and diced (rind and all!)
1 Tbsp olive oil
250 ml water

Method

Blend all ingredients together to form a liquid and strain to separate pulp. Serve the strained liquid in a glass and drink. She recommended that this should be taken first thing in the morning to cleanse and detoxify organs such as the liver and kidneys. No food should be consumed for two hours to let the process take place.

Note: *If you are undergoing treatment for breast cancer, please consult your medical team before using complementary therapies.*





The Breast Cancer Support Retreat



18-20 November, St Francis Retreat Centre, Hillsborough, Auckland

Twenty one women attended the inaugural BCS Retreat held at the St Francis Retreat Centre in Auckland’s Hillsborough, enjoying two days of rest, relaxation and nurturing activities facilitated by SoulPath Journey practitioners Misha Crosbie, Jessica Fleming, Elisabeth Crago and Elisabeth Meadows.

The attendees, ranging in age from 35 to early 70s, came from all parts of Auckland, representing the six BCS support groups. The Retreat was structured to take each woman on a journey of self discovery, encouraging them to discover how they currently nurture themselves and many were surprised to learn that they are not doing very well, with family, work and other concerns taking precedence. “A weekend like this lets women think about themselves,” said Misha. “Many have to leap out of bed every morning, fix breakfast, get children off to school ... this weekend offers them freedom to just walk in and have nothing to do.”

Retreat sessions provided venues for sharing and discussion, opportunities for listening to the stories of others, all shared with a generosity of spirit and honesty. In the telling, women gained hope, confidence and understanding. There was also an ongoing exchange of practical tips and information about treatments and side effects, reassuring for those about to begin conventional treatment regimes. On the Saturday evening, participants walked the Labyrinth, a symbolic, meditative walking of their breast cancer journey and all enjoyed a session of therapeutic Reiki or Jin Shin Jyutsu. BCS Chair Deirdre Parr attended the retreat, saying, “ The Retreat is another form of support that BCS can offer, and the need is definitely there.”

Meet Alice Worsley, BCS Ambassador



BCS is honoured to have renowned television and radio personality Alice Worsley (pictured with Deirdre Parr and Marie Goudge) as our Ambassador. The BCS Ambassador is a high profile representative of Breast Cancer Support and will help to heighten public awareness of the services and support we offer and enhance the public’s understanding of and engagement with our services. Alice’s professional expertise and presence, standing in the community and personal experience are well aligned with the BCS mission of supporting and empowering women emotionally on their journey with breast cancer, adding great value to

our ability to provide much-needed support services. Thank you Alice!



Supporting BCS

BCS gratefully acknowledges the support of our members and donors. It is through your generosity that we are able to provide our support services to women experiencing a diagnosis of breast cancer. Would you like to become a member of Breast Cancer Support or make a donation? Please complete this form below and post back to us at Breast Cancer Support, PO Box 10150, Dominion Road, Auckland 1446, or call us on 0800BreaCanSupport (0800 273 222) for more information. Thank you!

Name.....

Phone(0)..... Mob.....Email

Address.....

My membership/donation is enclosed:

Individual membership (\$20) Group (\$30) Unwaged (\$15) Joint (\$30) I enclose a donation of \$.....

I am a breast cancer survivor I would like to volunteer— please contact me

Please contact us for further information on 0800 273 222 or email support@breastcancersupport.co.nz.

Breast Friends – News from our Support Groups

Our Breast Friends groups have ended the meeting schedule for the year and meetings resume in February 2012. Groups keep in touch over the holidays and most meet informally in January. If you would like to know more about any of our six groups in Auckland, or would like to speak with someone over the holiday period, please call us on 0800 273 222.

Central (from Christine Rule)

October guest speaker Sarita Mitchell took us through good breathing techniques and some gentle yoga exercises, which can be done either seated or standing. These were particularly helpful for the joints and improving blood circulation and balance. We finished with lights turned off and some relaxation techniques which were wonderful. These should help us cope with stress and worry and be helpful for those with sleep and relaxation problems. The afternoon was very beneficial.

“Going, going, gone! First time, second time, third and final time!” was the call as member Cindy auctioned her way with dignity, aplomb and wit through a huge pile of donations of goodies brought by Central Breast Friends for our November auction. Ably assisted by Irene and Lynne who bagged the goods and kept a tally of the purchases for everyone, we raised a total of \$368.40 for Breast Cancer Support! Many of the items were new, making ideal, cheap Christmas presents and some of the not so new were bargains, such as \$6.00 for a vacuum cleaner which still worked very well and about the same for a foot spa bath. There was plenty of good-humoured banter and laughter among the bidders. It was necessary to stop for afternoon tea midway through, to gain extra energy for another round! Helen brought chocolate cake, grapes and date treats came via Irene and Christine, and there were apricot balls, crackers, cheese and Babaganoush. The small amount of items unsold at auction went to Hospice.

Hibiscus Coast (from Barbara McLean)

Sue Doig from Naturalwear visited us in October and gave an excellent presentation of her range of prostheses, bras and swimwear. She explained how prostheses can be worn, showing us the difference between a full and a partial, the different weights, textures and backings, and which ones work best for certain areas, issues and body types. She also talked about the range of nipples available and gave an informative explanation about her range of bras and how best to fit them, which ones work best for certain activities and body types, and how important it is to get the straps pulled up firmly to avoid back and neck issues in the future. She spoke about swimwear necklines and how flattering a crossover can be even on women who think they wouldn't dare any more, even if it takes a small stitch to hold the crossed over neckline from gaping. She also showed us a swimwear prosthesis, and explained how a swimsuit with built-in cups can sometimes be easier to wear and more natural-looking than a prosthesis in a swimsuit with the camisole-type bra, as the prostheses tend to drift south a bit without anything firm to hold them in place.

The HBC Breast Friends enjoyed their Christmas lunch this year at the Sand Trap Café at the Gulf Harbour Golf Course and Country Club. Fifteen ladies gathered for the much-looked-forward-to-social luncheon, complete with a visit from Santa's Helpers to deliver everyone a small gift. Lunch was delicious with a good choice of items from salads and BLTs to quiches and bacon and egg pie with salad – all washed down with glasses of wine! It was a great time enjoyed by all.

East Auckland (from Jennifer Woodroffe)

Podiatrist Heidi Stacevicius joined us for our last meeting of the year. Ten women enjoyed her very informative talk and some of us even exposed our feet! Heidi was able to suggest how we could all care for our oft-forgotten feet a bit better.

West Auckland (from Janet Catton and Marie Goudge)

The night started slowly but you could feel the excitement in the air, what bargains would unfold?



Auctioneer Cindy prepares to auction off an abundance of goodies at Central's Nov. auction, raising \$368.40 for BCS!



Breast Friend Jane assisted with the Hibiscus Coast Christmas lunch as Santa's Helper, complete with her 'Christmas Duck'.



Hibiscus Coast Breast Friends enjoyed Christmas lunch at The Sand Trap this year.



Breast Friends – News from our Support Groups

October's meeting out West saw the annual auction to raise funds for BCS. The auctioneer took her place and the bidding began. There was fierce competition for the home baking, and the toiletry packs. The bids rolled in between the laughter and the eating of delicious home made fudge. The evening ended with an empty table and happy shoppers and there will be lots of lovely people out there getting beautiful presents this year. The result from the evening certainly kept the BCS spirit alive, supporting our Breast Friends by raising over \$300.

Words to describe Gwendoline Smith, our November speaker, might be 'dynamic, enthusiastic, decisive, determined, passionate'. Gwendoline has had surgery for breast cancer and feels strongly that she can offer some help and support to other women with a breast cancer diagnosis by sharing some of her own experiences. Gwendoline is also a psychologist. and her newly launched book *Breast Support* has chapters dealing with a variety of issues that women may face. She covers the specific problems young women may encounter, as well as tips to help navigate through the hospital system. Practical suggestions served up with a spoon full of humour were scattered throughout her talk. Information about Gwendoline's book can be found at www.breastsupport.co.nz

North Shore (from Jenny Short)

The North Shore BCS group enjoyed a lively talk from Sue and Chris from the Pink Dragons Dragon Boat team in October. They both spoke enthusiastically about their experiences of dragon boating and how they got 'hooked' on it after their first tryout. We listened to their stories, watched a demonstration of the paddling technique, and were impressed by the great camaraderie and the friendships that develop from being part of the team. The Pink Dragons are recruiting new members and at least one— possibly more— of our members were keen to give it a try. Anyone wishing to find out more about the team can visit www.pinkdragons.org.nz.

In November we held our annual International Dinner at Geraldine's house, an opportunity for members to bring some cuisine from a culture they love. For some it is a chance to bring food representative of their homeland to share with others. These dinner events are always enjoyable as members like to relax and converse freely with old friends and new, share experiences and enjoy a good laugh. One of last night's laughs was the story one member told of accidentally cooking her wig when trying to dry it in a hurry. Another told of someone accidentally dropping the prosthesis out of her bra while at the supermarket checkout and kicking it under the counter hoping that no-one had noticed. It was another night on the lighter side of things but very therapeutic.

Auckland South (from Jill Mellow)

In October we had a poetry evening and everyone attending read out their poems. We discovered that we had a poet amongst us! Elizabeth read out several of her poems that she had written for family and friends and all now expect a Christmas poem with their Christmas cards. South Breast Friends Group Coordinator Annette visited South Africa last month and spoke about her experiences there, including her attendance at a Breast Friends meeting in Johannesburg. "My daughter-in-law's mother is also a breast cancer survivor and she is my South African Breast Buddy," said Annette. Approximately 100 women attended the Saturday morning meeting in Johannesburg and Annette was asked to say a few words ... and numbers attending were down due to school holidays! "I received a warm welcome," said Annette. South Auckland Breast Friends also enjoyed a visit from Ann Houghton at their November meeting. Ann is a great hand-crafter and conducts craft workshops. She brought along some of her beautiful creations to show, including cards and decorative boxes— great inspiration for all to try their hand at some Christmas crafts!



West Members enjoyed an October auction raising over \$300 for BCS ...



... and were entertained by author Gwendoline Smith in November.



Holidays can be difficult sometimes. If you need someone to talk to, call us on 0800 273 222. We're here ...

Breast Friends enjoy annual BCS Christmas Social



Fairy Heartstar wishes, fellowship, fun with trivia and Bingo, delicious food and Jennifer Woodrooffe's much looked-forward-to bowls of cold punch provided all the ingredients for a wonderful BCS Christmas social this year.



The annual event is organised by the BCS Committee as a 'thank you' to all who participate in Breast Friends groups and to those who support BCS in so many other ways throughout the year. Fairy Heartstar (pictured above right with Christine Rule) was so popular last year that she came by again to inspire wishes and hopes for the over 40 women who attended the function. The Christmas treat table was loaded down with goodies ... cream puffs, mince pies, delightful savouries, meringues and so much more. Committee Member Debbie Morrow had prepared a very entertaining and fun trivia quiz and Jennifer (pictured at left) conducted a Bingo session that had everyone intently studying their boards for that elusive 'line' of prize-winning success!



It was a lovely evening of friendship and sisterhood, much enjoyed by all and a perfect way to celebrate another year of BCS' work for women within our communities.

Upcoming Events and Programmes

BCS Social Walk, Saturday 21st January 2012

BCS is planning a fun walk for all Breast Friends on Saturday 21 January, meeting at 9.30am at the Cornwall Park Kiosk. BYO morning tea— we'll have a walk and then enjoy a well earned break under the shady trees! It'll be great fun.

BCS Mad Hatter's Tea Party, Mid-March 2012 (date to be advised)

And ... yet another social event to keep you on your toes! BCS is hoping to have a thoroughly 'mad' afternoon tea party so it's 'get out your best hats and outfits' and come along for a zany afternoon of fun and treats. This is a 'bring a plate' 'do' but BCS will provide the venue (to be advised) and the tea/coffee. We'll advise you of the date!



Relay for Life 2012, 18/19 February 2012

Breast Cancer Support will be helping out in the Survivors' Tent at Mt Smart, Auckland on Saturday 18 February 2012. If you can join us, or would like to participate in the Survivors' Lap, we should love to hear from you – please call Deirdre Parr (09) 815 2324. [Visit the Relay for Life website](#) to read more information.

Healthy Steps Exercise Programme (The Lebed Method) for 2012: 4 Feb—10 Mar;



14 April—10 May and throughout 2012

Lymphoedema therapist Michele Urlich is running programmes of Healthy Steps (also known as Lebed) at the Auckland Cancer Society. This movement-to-music based exercise programme is beneficial for those recovering from all cancers and participation in Michele's course is limited to those who have experienced any type of cancer. Each programme runs for 6 weeks and is \$30 payable in advance (\$5 per session for per participant). Each class lasts one hour and participants use 'props' such as Top Hats, feather boas



and belly dancing coin belts – lots of fun whilst doing something very positive for health and wellbeing. Email Michele for more information at m.urlich@clear.net.nz.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Breast Cancer Support Inc.