I ran into a friend the other day, and at first glance I didn’t recognize her. I had to sneak another look to make sure she was who I thought she was. You see, she didn’t have any hair. Neither did I.

We were both in hospital gowns waiting to get our daily dose of radiation to treat our breast cancer. We hugged, sat down, laughed, cried, and compared notes on our chemotherapy treatments, surgeries, and journeys. We have the same kind of breast cancer, and while our treatments are similar, they aren’t identical. It’s funny, but now we’re part of this big club—one we didn’t choose to join, but one we depend on for support.

As I was getting dressed to leave that day’s radiation, I realized that when I encounter someone I know, I don’t look as familiar as I think I do. I’ve learned to tell them who I am to alleviate that discomfort we all feel when we just can’t put a name with a face. I’ve been doing that since the day I lost my hair and put on my baseball cap.

Cancer does not discriminate. And I learned very quickly when I was diagnosed last January that there are no absolute answers to the question, “Why?” One of my doctors explained that we have cancer cells in our bodies every day, and that our immune system cleans them up. For whatever reason, sometimes a perfect storm of genetic, environmental, and other factors prevents our immune system from that housekeeping, and they take on a life of their own.

Far too many of us are touched by this disease, and it’s not just those who have the illness—our families, friends, and co-workers are affected, too. The good news is that there are more of us who have endured and survived than ever before. And health professionals in Maine have access to all of the latest research and best thinking from around the world.

I have been touched by the love and support of so many people. This is my chance to thank my medical team—the nurses, therapists, other patients, and especially Drs. Mary Brandes, Tracey Weisberg, Lisa Rutstein, Therese White, Celine Godin, and Mike Jones for their compassion, dedication, and care.

Over the past ten months I’ve thought about how to turn a personal challenge into something positive. With the support of all of the Port City Life staff, I thought the best way for me to give back would be to provide a look at how people in Maine are dealing with breast cancer. To offer some hope. We enlisted freelance writer Elisa Boxer to take on the task, and she has sensitively and thoughtfully reported and written the stories that appear on the following pages.

Sue
Scientists at The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor are developing genetically-engineered mice in order to study the relationship between normal breast stem cells and breast cancer stem cells.

Hospitals throughout the state are conducting clinical trials sponsored by pharmaceutical companies and major centers like Dana-Farber and the National Cancer Institute. These trials let patients receive promising new therapies without having to travel outside the state.

Researchers at the Maine Institute for Human Genetics and Health in Brewer are studying human breast-cancer tissue to determine which environmental and genetic factors cause Maine women to develop, recover from, or have recurrences of breast cancer.

Scientists at Maine Medical Center Research Institute in Scarborough are examining markers contained within breast tumors to find out what causes those tumors to spread throughout the body.

Doctors at True North Health Center in Falmouth are studying how diet, inflammation, environmental toxins, and physical and emotional stress interact with genes to cause breast cancer. They’re developing a breast cancer prevention program based on these findings.

Bowdoin College sociologist Susan Bell is studying how paintings, photographs, poetry, and sculpture featuring women at all stages of breast cancer have helped shape the grassroots movement of breast cancer awareness. “When a woman reveals herself in this way, it de-stigmatizes it, makes it public, confronts the cloak of silence, brings it into the open instead of hiding it,” says Bell, whose research focuses on how that visibility has prompted changes in legislation, research funding, social activism, and public discourse.

In 2008, an estimated 900 women and men (yes, men) in Maine will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Maine ranks ninth in the country for the incidence of the illness. While great strides have been made in diagnosing and treating the disease, more needs to be done, especially access to early diagnosis and care. Researchers are hard at work to determine what causes cancer, how to treat it, and how to prevent it. The Maine Cancer Foundation, which funds cancer research and patient care in Maine, has raised $772,200 for the Women’s Cancer Fund over the past six years and in 2007 wrote grants totaling $240,000. These grants are funded in part by events like the Cure Breast Cancer for ME luncheon in October, an online auction, and the Pink Tulip Project. Their newest event, Tri for a Cure, raised $200,000 in August. The good news is that breast cancer is treatable, there is an 85 percent success rate, and many in Maine are rallying for a cure.

Here’s a look at other developments in Maine in the fight against breast cancer:

- Scientists at The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor are developing genetically-engineered mice in order to study the relationship between normal breast stem cells and breast cancer stem cells.
- Hospitals throughout the state are conducting clinical trials sponsored by pharmaceutical companies and major centers like Dana-Farber and the National Cancer Institute. These trials let patients receive promising new therapies without having to travel outside the state.
- Researchers at the Maine Institute for Human Genetics and Health in Brewer are studying human breast-cancer tissue to determine which environmental and genetic factors cause Maine women to develop, recover from, or have recurrences of breast cancer.
- Scientists at Maine Medical Center Research Institute in Scarborough are examining markers contained within breast tumors to find out what causes those tumors to spread throughout the body.
- Doctors at True North Health Center in Falmouth are studying how diet, inflammation, environmental toxins, and physical and emotional stress interact with genes to cause breast cancer. They’re developing a breast cancer prevention program based on these findings.
- Bowdoin College sociologist Susan Bell is studying how paintings, photographs, poetry, and sculpture featuring women at all stages of breast cancer have helped shape the grassroots movement of breast cancer awareness. “When a woman reveals herself in this way, it de-stigmatizes it, makes it public, confronts the cloak of silence, brings it into the open instead of hiding it,” says Bell, whose research focuses on how that visibility has prompted changes in legislation, research funding, social activism, and public discourse.

Free Mammograms

The Maine Breast and Cervical Health Program, part of the Department of Health and Human Services, provides free annual breast and pelvic examinations, Pap tests, mammograms, and follow-up services for women ages 50 and older with no or limited health insurance and who meet the 2008 federal poverty guidelines. Exams are also available for women under 50 who are symptomatic or at high risk. The program funds nearly 300 sites statewide to provide screening, diagnostic services, public education, and support. Women with Medicare Part B or MaineCare are ineligible, as they are already covered under these programs. To find out more, call 287-8068 or toll-free 1-800-350-5180. For a list of locations, visit maine.gov/dhhs/bohdcfh/bcp/index.htm.
David Paul always considered himself a “can-do” guy. If a problem came up, he’d solve it. If a solution was needed, he’d find it.

Then along came his wife’s breast cancer.

“There aren’t too many things I can’t tackle,” Paul says. “This was one of them. I wanted to take this weight off her shoulders, and I couldn’t.”

Paul found himself feeling the powerlessness that so often plagues spouses, other family members, and close friends of people who develop a serious illness. Experts say it’s important to acknowledge that sense of helplessness and the frustration that can follow.

“It’s a very understandable response, in light of our do-it, fix-it culture,” says Beth Van Gorden, a South Portland psychotherapist who counsels families through serious illnesses.

But that sense of helplessness can be harnessed and that energy channeled, says Van Gorden, who was 19 when her own mother was diagnosed with breast cancer.

She suggests the primary caregiver make a list of everything that needs to happen (cooking meals, driving to appointments, etc.) and all the people who have offered to help. Organizational tools are also available online, such as lotsahelpinghands.com, with private group calendars for dividing duties.

“The key is to have everything organized, so the patient knows it’s getting done but they don’t have to be the one to do it,” Van Gorden says.

David went to work earlier and came home earlier so he could have dinner and laundry started by the time his wife Linda came home from her job as a kindergarten teacher. Her husband’s efforts contributed to her physical and emotional recovery, Linda says.

“I was always apologizing, telling him I’m sorry I’m not fun anymore,” she remembers. “He told me he was just glad he could take care of me for a change. That meant so much.”

He also accompanied his wife to doctor’s appointments and treatments—something experts say caregivers should do whenever possible.

A Guide For Caregivers, prepared by Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York and downloadable at mskcc.org, recommends making a list of questions and concerns before every appointment, then taking notes and keeping them in a folder with other medical information. The guide also encourages listening without trying to solve anything, asking the patient “what” instead of “how” they’re feeling, and simply spending time together as a family.

Jani Druck, manager of volunteer services for the Cancer Community Center in South Portland, says families need to “keep some space in their lives where cancer doesn’t rule.”

The Center offers free activities like yoga, meditation, painting, and pottery. Patients and their families can spend time learning together and enjoying each other in a supportive setting.

And it provides one-on-one and group support, where caregivers can share frustrations and fears.

Psychotherapist Van Gorden was also a caregiver to her mother. She encourages people in that position to nurture their own needs and feelings, and to remember they’re not alone.

“It’s like the oxygen mask on a plane,” she says. “If you don’t put yours on first, you’re not going to be much help to anyone else.”

Being a caregiver means being different things at different times. But most patients seem to agree that the caregiver’s most important role is simply being there.

“Dave was my rock,” says Linda. “Just having someone there to hold you and say you look pretty when you’re bald and you have no eyebrows or eyelashes … it made our marriage stronger because we were reminded how lucky we were to have each other.”

Resources

Cancer Community Center
778 Main St. (Route One)
S. Portland
774-2200
cancercommunitycenter.org

The National Caregivers Association
1-800-896-3650
thefamilycaregiver.org

Cancer Care
1-800-813-HOPE
cancercare.org

How to Help When You Feel Helpless

Experts say it’s important to acknowledge that sense of helplessness and frustration when a family member or close friend develops a serious illness.
There is **Strength in numbers**

- Nearly **50%** of all the board-certified cancer treatment specialists in Maine are part of MCCM.
- **8,600** patients and their families receive personalized treatment at MCCM every year.
- Our **24** treatment providers have hundreds of years of combined experience.
- More than **50** clinical trials are conducted each year, giving our patients access to the latest treatments.
- **150** qualified professional employees in four convenient locations are completely dedicated to you and your care.
- Hundreds of miles logged as our providers travel to clinics in Belfast, Boothbay, North Conway, Norway and other communities in Maine to share their expertise.

When you need cancer treatment, look at the numbers. At MCCM, they add up to the best care in Maine.
More and more cancer patients are integrating acupuncture, meditation, guided imagery, massage, reiki energy therapy, and the like into their conventional treatments.

Beyond Convention

When women with breast cancer walk through Debra Walton’s door, they want to awaken the healer within.

“The surgeon has the high-level technical skills, but it’s the body that’s doing the healing,” says Walton, a clinical nurse specialist in mental health. She uses meditation and hypnotherapy to help patients access a centered state of mind, which research shows can strengthen the immune and nervous systems, decrease pain, and increase healing.

Walton and other Portland-area practitioners say more and more breast cancer patients want to supplement traditional treatments with complementary therapies that support the body’s innate ability to heal.

Patients at Maine Medical Center (MMC) can request reiki—a hands-on energy therapy shown to improve blood flow, relieve pain, and decrease side effects from chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery.

“I had total relaxation with no fear,” says Sandy Cranford, a founder of MMC’s reiki program who later received reiki before each of 36 radiation treatments. Cranford says the therapy helped her continue working by decreasing stress and pain.

Mercy Hospital also incorporates stress- and pain-relief into its conventional treatments.

“Massage is a great way to start chemotherapy, because you’re petrified,” says Carolyn Murphy, an oncology nurse at Mercy. She’s seen massage decrease nausea, diarrhea, and other side effects. “When you’re wound up, everything hurts worse.”

Both Mercy and MMC offer classes on how to decrease anxiety before and after surgery, using guided imagery and healing affirmations. Similar sessions are offered at True North Health Center in Falmouth.

“Your beliefs powerfully affect your body, so visualizing chemotherapy or radiation as a healing ally helps with side effects,” says Cynthia Atkinson, a certified energy medicine and healing touch practitioner at True North. Atkinson teaches a relaxation method based on the book Prepare for Surgery, Heal Faster by Peggy Huddleston (Angel River Press, 1996). Doctors at Harvard Medical School are studying the method for its ability to speed healing in women having mastectomies and lumpectomies.

Atkinson says breast cancer patients often carry grief over...
losing part of their body. Deep fears and limiting beliefs such as “I am no longer a whole woman” can be unearthed, she says, and the energy rebalanced.

Acupuncture can also rebalance energy. Fern Tsao of Acupuncture Associates in Yarmouth has been practicing since 1972. Over the years, she’s helped a growing number of breast cancer patients decrease pain and side effects from treatment. Tsao says that acupuncture increases energy flow, strengthening the immune system and hastening healing. Many women with estrogen-related cancers also use acupuncture to balance hormones.

“Cancer has an impact on many levels—spiritual, emotional, physiological … We need a holistic approach that treats the whole being,” says Colleen Tetzlaff, an oncology nurse practitioner at Maine Women’s Surgery and Cancer Center, an MMC affiliate. Tetzlaff refers patients to acupuncture and massage. She also recommends physical therapy to address cancer-related fatigue.

Port City Physical Therapy owner Jason Lanouette saw his mother battle breast cancer and “watched her get walloped from fatigue.” Lanouette helps patients develop pre- and post-surgery exercises that fight fatigue during treatment and recovery.

Holistic Physical Therapy Services in South Portland also helps breast cancer patients with physical and emotional rehabilitation. “An 80-year-old woman after a mastectomy might just want to be able to put her dishes in the cupboard again. Someone else might want to return to golf,” says Michelle Sirois, a physical therapist specializing in women’s health. She combines soft-tissue techniques with breath work and pilates exercises to help patients improve range of motion, balance, and confidence.

Healthcare practitioners who advocate this integrative approach say there are as many paths to healing as there are patients.

“The human being is much more than a physical body,” says True North’s Research Director Joe Semmes, M.D., himself a cancer survivor. Semmes advises patients about nutrients, supplements, treatments, and techniques that can help prevent and manage cancer. He’s also working with MMC and Mercy to develop their integrative offerings.

“Cancer isn’t just getting a diagnosis and getting a drug,” he says. “It’s making a mind-body connection.” ★

---

**A FITNESS CENTER LIKE NO OTHER**

With a mind-body philosophy that emphasizes total wellness, outstanding fitness professionals and an aesthetically pleasing space, The Body Architect is a far cry from the average gym. Stop by and see what you’ve been missing or learn more at thebodyarchitect.com.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- Individualized personal training: accomplish more in less time.
- Whole body fitness classes: Yoga, Qi Gong, Pilates and Strong Women.
- Saco Bay Physical Therapy: heal faster through the cutting-edge techniques practiced by SBPT therapists.
- Nutritional Coaching: achieve and maintain your ideal weight.
- Spa-like amenities: revive yourself with a rain shower and natural body care products.
- Free Parking

---

**RESOURCES**

Cancer Community Center  
778 Main St. (Route One), S. Portland  
774-2200  
cancercommunitycenter.org

True North Health Center  
202 U.S. Route 1  
Falmouth  
781-4488  
truenorthhealthcenter.org

Cancer Care  
1-800-813-HOPE  
cancercare.org
When Melissa Spear learned last year that she had breast cancer, she struggled with what to say to her 11-year-old daughter Abbey.

“I was nervous. I was numbed out. I was breaking down every five minutes,” recalls Spear, 33, of Old Orchard Beach. “Abbey’s a worrier, and I didn’t want her to worry.”

For Spear and other parents facing serious illness, talking with children adds anxiety to an already distressing situation. After processing the diagnosis themselves, parents often feel caught between wanting to tell their children the truth and wanting to protect them from the pain.

Experts say honesty is always the best place to begin.

“Whether it’s death, divorce, or disease, there’s always a desire to shield our kids from trauma,” says Christine Bennett, M.D., a pediatrician and a consultant for the Center for Grieving Children in Portland. “We’re afraid bad news will bother them. But they’re smart, and they’re going to be more bothered if they feel alienated from what’s going on.” Bennett adds that honesty establishes trust, which is important as the family continues to cope with cancer.

The key is to be honest without being overwhelming.

Bennett says it’s important to use words and concepts appropriate to the child’s age and maturity level. Younger children, for example, can be told in simple, concrete terms that Mommy has cancer and the doctors are helping her get better. Older children can handle more specific descriptions about how tumors form and how chemotherapy works.

At any age, experts say, children should be repeatedly reassured of your love and your acknowledgement that their lives and routines will be affected. Younger children will need to be prepared for the fact that the parent might feel tired or sick at times, and unable to play. Older children might need to spend more time caring for younger siblings.

“In some families it may be necessary for the children to help more with chores, and they often receive less attention because of cancer treatments or doctor’s appointments. If they don’t understand why this is happening, they might feel as if they are being punished,” states the American Cancer Society’s Talking With Children About Cancer. The document is available online at cancer.org or by calling 1-800-ACS-2345.

Parents can help by understanding that reactions like withdrawing, regressing, or acting out are normal. Creating a safe environment for children to ask questions, express feelings, and voice concerns is a good idea. And parents shouldn’t hesitate to show their own vulnerability.

“It’s all right for your children to see your fears and your tears,” says Carol Sylvester, who runs the Center for Grieving Children’s Tender Living Care Program (TLC) for families facing serious illness.

“You might end up with your teenager crying in your lap. That’s human,” she says. “If you don’t open the door to that humanness, you’re keeping everyone else cut off. This is about connection.”

Equally important for maintaining that connection, Sylvester says, is offering your children the chance to be involved in certain aspects of your treatment. Some families have a hair-cutting ceremony at home, for example, so it’s not as big of a shock when long hair falls out during chemotherapy. Melissa Spear took Abbey shopping and let her help pick out a wig. They both got hats in similar styles.

Spear found that involving her daughter also helped facilitate regular conversations about breast cancer. That communication became especially important when Abbey...
Child Support
The Center for Grieving Children’s Tender Living Care program supports families facing serious illness from the point of diagnosis. They offer peer support groups and activities for children ages 3-18 and their families. They also provide phone support and handouts on how to talk with children about cancer.

The Center’s new book, A Family’s Journey: a Handbook for Living with Illness and Finding Hope, includes personal stories, advice, and projects to help families explore their feelings. For more information, contact Carol Sylvester at carol@cgcmaine.org or 775-5216 or visit cgcmaine.org.

Helpful Books
Ann Spelz
The Year My Mother Was Bald (Magination Press)

Judith Vigna
When Eric’s Mom Fought Cancer (Albert Whitman & Company)

Abigail and Adrienne Ackerman,
Our Mom Has Cancer (American Cancer Society)

began picking up scary information at school. “She would come home telling me how her friend’s aunt or grandmother died of cancer,” Spear says. “I would remind her of the people we know who survived cancer.”

Fear of a parent dying is one of the most common reactions to learning about cancer, experts say. And while that fear may never go away, parents can help by reassuring the child that they’re doing everything possible to recover.

“You can say, ‘I’m taking good care of myself and working really hard to get better, and the doctors are working really hard to help me get better,’” Sylvester advises. “And let them know a lot of people do get all better from cancer.”

The key, she says, is to hold hope along with the fear, because both can bring families closer.

“In the midst of the journey of illness, there are opportunities for great richness and communication. There can be a life-affirming feeling that we’re all connected. We’re all in this together.”

Supporting You and Your Health, One Foot at a Time

Lynn Marie Danforth
Certified Reflexologist
767-5776

In Home Visits • Flexible Scheduling • Group Rates
Gift Certificates • www.handsonfeet.net

Think Pink. Drive pink!
Beginning October 1, 2008, the new Maine Breast Cancer License Plate will be available statewide. Plates can be purchased at all Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicle branch offices and at many town offices. Proceeds will go to support breast cancer education, patient support and research. All funds stay 100% in Maine. For more information, call 207-624-9000, press 1, then press ext. 52149.

When You’re Looking for a Beautiful Change — It’s the Doctors Who Make the Difference.

Meet Our Board-Certified Plastic Surgeons

IMPROVED APPEARANCE. A fresh outlook. Renewed self-confidence. Cosmetic and breast reconstruction surgery in our hands can bring wonderful changes to you.

If you’re thinking about cosmetic or breast surgery, the only surgeon you should consider is one who is certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery (ABPS). Our ABPS-certified surgeons have at least five years of general surgical training and are fellowship-trained in plastic surgery. Their in-depth training and experience make them uniquely qualified to perform your cosmetic or breast procedure.

As plastic surgeons, the physicians at Plastic & Hand provide a superior level of care. It’s a difference you’ll appreciate every time you look in the mirror.

QUESTIONS?
Call to speak with our experienced and friendly staff.
775-3446 or 800-924-3591
www.plasticandhand.com

Plastic, Reconstructive & Cosmetic Surgery
Surgery of the Hand
Skin Solutions

Plastic, Reconstructive & Cosmetic Surgery Associates, P.A.
Benevolent Bags

For the second straight year, Sea Bags, a company that creates tote bags from recycled sails, is selling a limited edition “Cure Bag,” emblazoned with a large pink ribbon. The bags will be available through the end of December (while supplies last). Fifty percent of proceeds go directly to the Maine Cancer Foundation. Last year the effort raised over $15,000. This time around the company is looking to surpass that mark. Co-owner Beth Shissler says that most of the staff have family members who have been touched by cancer, and it is a cause “near and dear to our hearts.”

To check out the various sizes, visit seabags.com.

A Hands-on Approach

The T-shirts grab your attention. They’re pink, with a pair of black handprints across the chest. Some say they’re edgy. Others say they’re offensive. Their creator is just glad people are saying something.

“I want the hands to stand out and make you think,” says Victor Rios, a student at Southern Maine Community College. “Because that’s the key to prevention.”

Rios created the shirts to raise awareness about early detection of breast cancer, after one of his grandmothers died from the illness. His other grandmother is facing breast cancer for the second time. He’s donating 25 percent of proceeds from these T-shirts to the Maine Cancer Foundation.

To encourage self exams starting early, Rios is targeting 18- to 30-year-olds. He even takes his creations to nightclubs, using the party atmosphere to market the message. To learn more about Rios’s “Expose Charity” clothing line, visit exposedesign.com.

A Pattern of Support

The spirit of sisterhood and the courage to carry on have inspired one local businesswoman to honor the strength of another. Ann Perrino, who owns a Cape Elizabeth textile company, has designed a pink ribbon print as a tribute to Port City Life publisher Laurie Hyndman.

The print is called “Bravery,” and ten percent of all sales will go to the Maine Cancer Foundation to support breast cancer research.

Perrino, who owns Ann Veronica LLC, says she also created the print for the millions of women who summon the strength every day to cope with breast cancer. “This print is to honor what Laurie and all women find when they rise above what could be a personal tragedy,” says Perrino. “Because no matter how many people you have supporting you, each woman really has to find her own bravery.”

Perrino and Hyndman met as volunteer members of the Junior League of Portland. Both eventually served as president.

“There is a bond—a kind of sisterhood—between women who have served in this capacity,” says Perrino, who early on was struck by her friend’s determination. “As a leader, she was given challenges every day and learned to rise above adversity and face each challenge.” She sees Hyndman bringing that same strength to her struggle with breast cancer.

Using textile art as her medium, Perrino hopes to send a universal message of hope and healing to every woman, while delivering a more personal message to her friend. “It’s my way of saying, ‘Laurie, I don’t know how else to tell you I care, but I care.’ A lot.” To learn more, visit annveronica.com.
What To Put in a Patient Care Package

Breast cancer survivors and caregivers offered these ideas:

- ginger tea (helps ease nausea)
- relaxation/meditation CDs
- a journal
- thin hats for sleeping (hair loss in winter can cause a cold head at night)
- fun hats or scarves
- magazines
- lip balm (treatment can cause dry lips)
- fragrance-free personal care products (chemotherapy often increases sensitivity to artificial scents)
- healing stones, votives, figurines, a small stuffed animal, or other comfort/inspirational items
The road to recovery is lined with leaders who have made the trek themselves, then doubled back to direct new travelers. Such is the case with breast cancer. Survivors across the state are supporting others just beginning to deal with the disease.

“Talking to someone who’s been there is a safe haven,” says Diane Tyler of Cape Elizabeth, a two-time survivor. “You can talk about anything—treatment, reconstruction ... or you can just have a pity party for five minutes.”

Tyler volunteers for the Maine Buddy Program, run by the Cancer Community Center in South Portland. The program connects newly diagnosed patients with trained volunteers who have been through the same type of cancer.

“People need a break from feeling strong,” says Michele Johns, executive director of the Center. “Sometimes people don’t want to worry their families, so they feel like they have to be brave and positive. With a buddy you can say, ’I feel lousy. This hurts. This isn’t fair.’”

Buddies can also compare coping strategies and talk through treatment options.

The American Cancer Society runs a similar program, called Reach to Recovery. Survivors in each state are trained and matched with women who are newly diagnosed or who have just had surgery. One local volunteer says an important part of mentoring is serving as a role model for recovery.

“I visit women in the hospital after they’ve just had surgery, and they tell me how normal I look,” says Carol Wise, a breast cancer survivor from South Bristol. “I say that’s the point. I tell them I’ve been there, I’ve had what they have, and I’m here to show them life will get better.”

Reach to Recovery volunteers also connect women with local resources. For example, the American Cancer Society offers free wigs and makeup consultations through its Look Good, Feel Better program. And breast cancer patients are eligible for free transportation to medical appointments through the Road to Recovery program. Every initial visit from a volunteer includes a handmade bag with breast cancer brochures and booklets. Women also receive a special pillow to help them sleep more comfortably after surgery.

“I cannot even tell you what a great gift this is,” says Wise, who received one herself 18 years ago. “You have this absent side of you, a side that has been violated. So you put this pillow under your arm while you sleep, and it’s so comfortable.”

Hand sewn by a caring volunteer, it’s also a symbol of support. Providing the pillow, along with a safe space to talk about cancer, is Wise’s way of bringing her gratitude full circle.

“I’m extremely lucky to still be here on this earth,” she says. “This is my payback time.”

“I tell them I’ve been there, I’ve had what they have, and I’m here to show them life will get better.” —Carol Wise, breast cancer survivor

The Great Outdoors

Local retreats where people with breast cancer can enjoy nature, camaraderie, and support include

Casting for Recovery
castingforrecovery.org

Two Roads
tworoadsmaine.org

Adventure Weekend
cancer.org

One-on-one Support

Cancer Community Center’s Maine Buddy Program
cancercommunitycenter.org
1-877-774-2200

American Cancer Society’s Reach to Recovery program
cancer.org
1-800-ACS-2345

For a breast cancer support group in your area, contact the above organizations or your local hospital.

These Buddies Are a Boost

The road to recovery is lined with leaders who have made the trek themselves, then doubled back to direct new travelers. Such is the case with breast cancer. Survivors across the state are supporting others just beginning to deal with the disease.

“Talking to someone who’s been there is a safe haven,” says Diane Tyler of Cape Elizabeth, a two-time survivor. “You can talk about anything—treatment, reconstruction ... or you can just have a pity party for five minutes.”

Tyler volunteers for the Maine Buddy Program, run by the Cancer Community Center in South Portland. The program connects newly diagnosed patients with trained volunteers who have been through the same type of cancer.

“People need a break from feeling strong,” says Michele Johns, executive director of the Center. “Sometimes people don’t want to worry their families, so they feel like they have to be brave and positive. With a buddy you can say, ’I feel lousy. This hurts. This isn’t fair.’”

Buddies can also compare coping strategies and talk through treatment options.

The American Cancer Society runs a similar program, called Reach to Recovery. Survivors in each state are trained and matched with women who are newly diagnosed or who have just had surgery. One local volunteer says an important part of mentoring is serving as a role model for recovery.

“I visit women in the hospital after they’ve just had surgery, and they tell me how normal I look,” says Carol Wise, a breast cancer survivor from South Bristol. “I say that’s the point. I tell them I’ve been there, I’ve had what they have, and I’m here to show them life will get better.”

Reach to Recovery volunteers also connect women with local resources. For example, the American Cancer Society offers free wigs and makeup consultations through its Look Good, Feel Better program. And breast cancer patients are eligible for free transportation to medical appointments through the Road to Recovery program. Every initial visit from a volunteer includes a handmade bag with breast cancer brochures and booklets. Women also receive a special pillow to help them sleep more comfortably after surgery.

“I cannot even tell you what a great gift this is,” says Wise, who received one herself 18 years ago. “You have this absent side of you, a side that has been violated. So you put this pillow under your arm while you sleep, and it’s so comfortable.”

Hand sewn by a caring volunteer, it’s also a symbol of support. Providing the pillow, along with a safe space to talk about cancer, is Wise’s way of bringing her gratitude full circle.

“I’m extremely lucky to still be here on this earth,” she says. “This is my payback time.”

KC McAuliffe, front, does yoga with fellow cancer survivors during a class at the Cancer Community Center in South Portland.
Radiant Impressions was created as a gift of love by an orthodontist for his wife. Several years ago in Lexington, KY, an orthodontist and his wife went looking for an off-the-shelf breast form after her mastectomy. The orthodontist and his wife were quickly disappointed with what they were presented. Because of her attire – blue jeans and t-shirts – both believed they were shown “low end” products. In reality, they were shown the best products available at the time.

The doctor knew how to make realistic teeth, so he decided he could do the same for a breast for his wife. For weeks, he experimented with the materials he used for making molds in his orthodontic practice. Eventually, he created a replica of her remaining breast, complete with a nipple and areola. She regained self-esteem and confidence and felt a sense of wholeness for the first time since her mastectomy.

Since then, thousands of women have received a Radiant Impressions Custom Breast Prosthesis. Today, the prostheses are hand carved and sculpted by talented artists at the Radiant Impressions Production Studio in Lexington, KY. To see a sample of the Radiant Impressions Custom Breast Prosthesis and to learn more about the product, contact a Radiant Impressions dealer.
Giving Hope to Families

When illness enters a family, it can be both a difficult time and an opportunity to strengthen family ties. This guidebook from The Center for Grieving Children’s Tender Living Care program shares stories of families and the ways they have found to deal with the ups and downs an illness brings. From the point of diagnosis, this book will help you and your children as you adjust to the changing realities of serious illness. At the end of each chapter are activities that will help you and your family to both explore the feelings that arise during illness and to celebrate family life.

Books are $15.00 each (please use coupon code Heart to get this special price) and are available by calling The Center for Grieving Children (207) 775-5216 or by visiting our website www.cgcmaine.org.

Support for this book was provided by The Maine Community Foundation - Hospice Fund. For more information about A Family’s Journey or The Tender Living Care program please call Carol Sylvester at The Center for Grieving Children - (207) 775-5216, ext 110.

Events

Komen Race for the Cure
September 21
Bangor waterfront
komenmaine.com

Saco Bay Physical Therapy 5K
To benefit breast cancer research
September 27
4 p.m. Saco
sacobaypt.com

Cure Breast Cancer for ME Luncheon
October 1
Holiday Inn by the Bay
curebreastcancerforme.org

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer
October 19
Brunswick, Damariscotta, Portland
cancer.org

Cure Breast Cancer for ME Online auction
October 1-30
mainecancer.org

Pink Tulip Project
October planting, May blooms
Statewide
pinktulipproject.org

What are you doing to prevent breast cancer?

Dr. Bethany M. Hays, MD, FACOG, nationally recognized expert in women’s hormones and Medical Director of True North, can help you create an individualized program focused on nutrition, stress reduction and supplementation – based on your genes and hormone levels – that can decrease your risk of getting cancer.

Call 207.781.4488 to schedule a free 15-minute ‘get acquainted’ visit with Dr. Hays and discuss how her Functional Medicine approach to "comprehensive health care" can help lower your risk for breast cancer.

True North, at Foreside Place, 202 US Route 1 in Falmouth, Maine
207.781.4488 • www.truenorthhealthcenter.org
When breast cancer strikes, experience counts.

And we set the standard for treatment in Maine.

Every year, more women turn to Breast Care Specialists of Maine for hope, help and healing. That’s because Mercy has two physicians dedicated solely to breast surgery, backed by a comprehensive team of experts, from oncologists, radiologists and pathologists to lymphedema and massage therapists, dietitians, social workers and nurse specialists.

Breast Care Specialists of Maine is now located at 195 Fore River Parkway, on Mercy’s new Fore River Campus: (207) 879-3088.

Also located at 195 Fore River Parkway:

Mercy Oncology Hematology Center: (207) 879-3030
Mercy Lymphedema Treatment Center: (207) 879-3790
Breast Imaging Services, including digital mammography
To schedule your next mammogram, call (207) 879-3737

www.mercyhospital.org
As part of his senior project at Freeport High School last year, Anders Samuelson wrote about five Mainers who approached their cancer diagnoses with vows to stay active in the outdoors. Two of those he profiled were breast cancer patients. Here’s an excerpt from his work, which he titled “Cancer, Smancer. Let’s Play.”

“This … is about real people who love to surf, paddle, run, and ski and who just happen to have cancer,” he wrote. Samuelson is a first year student at Bowdoin College.

Outdoor Therapy

In September of 1999, Meredith Burgess, a Cumberland resident and Sugarloaf “since rotary telephones and typewriters,” was diagnosed with breast cancer. By the end of November, she had undergone a double mastectomy, reconstruction, and three or four other operations. “It was a pretty thorough rearranging of the body,” she says. That January she began chemotherapy once every three weeks, which she scheduled around her ski schedule. Chemotherapy was on Mondays. Tuesdays and Wednesdays were “recovery days,” and by Thursday or Friday, Burgess was ready for the “oh-so-familiar” ritualistic Friday night pilgrimage to the ski area. “On Saturday morning, it was time to go skiing. After chemo, it wasn’t easy.” But unlike other therapies, skiing gave Burgess a “sense of control.” It became therapeutic for her because it was something that she wanted to do.

“Sugarloaf was my medicine,” she explains. The support she received from her family and from other skiers was very important. “Plus,” she recalls, “I never had to worry about helmet hair.” Today, Burgess is the CEO of her own advertising company and a member of the Maine House of Representatives. ★

Before she was diagnosed with breast cancer in May of 2005, Marji Adams of Cumberland, Maine went for a run every day of the week. After undergoing two surgeries in two weeks, she had chemotherapy treatments once every two weeks for 16 weeks. She ran through the entire treatment cycle, and when she was too sick to run, she walked.

“It ma

I keep her body strong. “It was so hard to haul myself out of bed, but I knew I had to do it.” ★
J’Accents
Inspirational Tablescapes

Thinking Pink!

Dinnerware
Flatware
Stemware
Candles
Linens
Bridal gifts

Simon Pearce
Riverside
Design Group
Love Plates
Sabre
Emma
Bridgewater
Rosanna

A portion of your purchase from any items on our PINK TABLE will be donated to the Women’s Cancer Fund at the Maine Cancer Foundation, which funds research and patient support in Maine.

15 Free Street, Portland, ME 04101  P: 207 773 9400  www.j-accents.com  jackie@j-accents.com

Treating the whole person... Not just the pain

I view women’s healthcare as my priority.

Caitlin M. Morrisroe, M.S., D.C.

Weight Management
Infertility • Migraines
Menstrual Issues
Wellness Care • Pain Relief

The Bay Club, 1 City Center, Portland
Hours: Mon-Sat by appt.

699-2622
absolutehealthchiropractic.org

J’Accents
Inspirational Tablescapes

Thinking Pink!

Dinnerware
Flatware
Stemware
Candles
Linens
Bridal gifts

Simon Pearce
Riverside
Design Group
Love Plates
Sabre
Emma
Bridgewater
Rosanna

A portion of your purchase from any items on our PINK TABLE will be donated to the Women’s Cancer Fund at the Maine Cancer Foundation, which funds research and patient support in Maine.

15 Free Street, Portland, ME 04101  P: 207 773 9400  www.j-accents.com  jackie@j-accents.com

Treating the whole person... Not just the pain

I view women’s healthcare as my priority.

Caitlin M. Morrisroe, M.S., D.C.

Weight Management
Infertility • Migraines
Menstrual Issues
Wellness Care • Pain Relief

The Bay Club, 1 City Center, Portland
Hours: Mon-Sat by appt.

699-2622
absolutehealthchiropractic.org

Sea Bags

Order the Limited Edition Pink Ribbon Sea Bag and 50% of the purchase price goes directly to the Maine Cancer Foundation.

Available September 15.  While Supplies Last.
Small, Medium, and Large Totes.
Recycle for a Cure Today!

25 Custom House Wharf  (888) 210-4244
Portland, Maine 04101  www.seabags.com
Sailed Around the World. Recycled in Maine.