

Breast Cancer Action

Breast Cancer has a Face. Hope has a Place.

SPRING 2008



Proudly
Celebrating
15 Years
of Serving
Our Community
in 2008.

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STEPPING OUT: A Women's HEALTH and WELLNESS Day!

In today's society, healthy lifestyle choices, a committed mind-body-spirit approach and finding avenues that serve to further support quality of life are becoming a natural part of how women strive to reach total well-being.

On **Saturday, May 10, 2008**, between the hours of 9:30am to 3:30pm, Breast Cancer Action will be hosting our first annual health and wellness day dedicated exclusively to women of all ages!

Held in the lower level of St. Elias, this event welcomes a large number of exhibitors with booths highlighting a variety of holistic and natural approaches to achieving health, fitness, wellness and nutrition. Many of

our exhibitors will be offering visitors an introduction to their services or products



including therapeutic touch, foot reflexology, reiki treatments, Indian head massages, feng shui...and so much more! Throughout the day, a number of interactive demonstrations and mini workshops will be held free of charge with admission. Healthy snacks and lunch

items may be purchased on-site and parking is available at no cost. Admission tickets for this event are available through BCA for \$15, or may be purchased at the door for \$20.

Doors open at 9:30am and the first 50 visitors to the event will receive a fantastic gift bag filled with special vouchers and items compliments of our many exhibitors. All event visitors will qualify to win a variety of door prizes simply by attending and filling out the ballot on the reverse side of the admission ticket.

(Please visit our website for a list of exhibitors, workshops and alternate locations where tickets may be purchased.)

Maxwell's Bistro "CHAMPIONS for CHARITY" Event

During March 31—April 14, everyone can become a Maxwell's Bistro "Champion for Charity." Breast Cancer Action is pleased to welcome to our growing list of 2008 community partners and friends, Maxwell's Bistro.

Located at 340 Elgin Street in Ottawa, Maxwell's Bistro offers patrons casual dining in a trendy atmosphere. In

support of BCA, Maxwell's Bistro will generously donate 25% of all sales (Brunch-Lunch-Dinner) to our organization during the March 31 to April 14 timeframe PLUS...Maxwell's will be drawing **more than 50 prizes to be** won during the 2-week period! For further info, or to make a reservation, please contact Maxwell's staff direct at (613) 232-5771.



www.maxwellsbistro.com

President's MESSAGE: Diane Ryan

Open communication and a service mentality are recognized hallmarks of a successful organization. Few organizations, however, put this into practice. Regrettably, it is a fact that those in the not for profit sector face many challenges as they continuously work with fewer resources than those in the private sector. At Breast Cancer Action, staff and volunteers try very hard to ensure we are meeting the needs of our membership and, in the process, welcome any feedback you can give us to improve upon what we do.

Communication is key to reaching our membership. Have you been to our website lately? In an effort to communicate more effectively with you, you will notice many exciting changes. This is the place to start to find out general information about the organization, as well as our programs and services, upcoming events and so much more. You can visit us at www.bcaott.ca.

For those who shared their e-mail address with BCA, you should have received our first communication using a new e-mail program to which we have recently subscribed. This will allow us to easily send out group communications to share with you items of interest. In an effort to reduce overhead costs and to be environmentally friendly, many of you have informed us that you are willing to get your newsletter online rather than by post and we hope more of you will do so. If you want to reach us by e-mail, you can do so by writing info@bcaott.ca.

Of course, these new communication channels are additions and do not replace the telephone nor our drop in center at the Riverside Mall which you are always most welcome to visit. All are efforts to provide our members with programs and services they value as well as to reach out to our community. Your participation and feedback are critical to our improvement and I invite you to communicate these to us by whatever means you are comfortable with.

In closing, may I invite all of you and your friends for a meal at **Maxwell's Bistro** at 340 Elgin Street, Ottawa between *March 31 and April 14*. Twenty-five percent of all sales during that time will be donated to Breast Cancer Action and we are very proud and grateful for this new community partnership.



CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF SERVING OUR COMMUNITY.

*Photo: Diane Ryan pictured with
Diana Rivington and Dianne Hartling
during the 15th year birthday bash
held at Breast Cancer Action
in February of 2008.*

Executive Director's MESSAGE: Marjorie Morrison



Every now and again, as we move through time, we experience a defining moment that remains with us. A memory we hold close to our hearts—one we share with those who are important to us and, perhaps even then, only with reverence.

As your Executive Director, I am faced each day with the responsibility of reaching decisions that best allow Breast Cancer Action to function in a multi-dimensional, all-inclusive capacity. Ultimately, these decisions serve to ensure that BCA is positioned to work toward improving our programs and services, as well as implementing new and exciting initiatives based on support and education.

By means of our quarterly newsletter, I often share details of BCA's many accomplishments from the perspective of an Executive Director. At times, and in hindsight, I imagine that it may seem that I tend to focus on applauding the destinations we reached rather than sharing various aspects of the journeys. In this issue, I've elected to share a memory I hold close to my heart not from the perspective of your Executive Director but rather, from the perspective of someone who believes in the strength of the human spirit and the power of this organization as a whole.

During a recent hockey game held as a fundraiser for BCA in Stittsville, I felt an enormous sense of pride and a true sense of community support as I watched the young boys (ages 7-8) take to the ice. While listening intently to a group of breast cancer survivors seated nearby, most of whom were BCA members, I realized with clarity that we each in our own unique way share a very special link to this organization. Whether we turn to the organization in search of support or whether we give of ourselves so that we may help others, we are all "caretakers" of BCA.

As many of you are aware, Breast Cancer Action celebrates 15 years of serving our community this year—an incredible milestone for a small, grassroots community-based organization. In celebrating 15 years of history, BCA remains vibrant and continues to grow as a result of being carefully tended to and respected over the years.

Without question, navigation of the road between "then and now" would never have been possible without the dedication and commitment of so many

women who have, since our conception, acted as caretakers of this organization. Amazing women like Jill Jackson, Carol Jones, Irene Scott, Diana Rivington, Nora Dean and Dianne Hartling come to mind but there are countless others too numerous to mention, yet too valuable to ever forget.

That day in the hockey rink seated amongst breast cancer survivors, friends and BCA supporters dressed in pink and yelling out words of support, I came to truly appreciate that my role means I am as much a caretaker of BCA as the women before me, and the women who will follow after me. The clarity of that moment, combined with the strength of my memories of the day, reinforce the position that caretakers are critical to the health of the organization and indeed, allow BCA to continue to move forward with determination and purpose.

I know firsthand that BCA is a place where hope lives, thrives, and grows and I believe that together, caretakers collectively cultivate the organization by tending to its many branches as if it were a garden in need of caring hands to keep the soil rich. As a caretaker, I spend a significant amount of time, energy and effort ensuring that BCA is healthy and that we have the necessary funds in place to meet the diverse and growing needs of our membership, and our community. That is the role I am entrusted with and, at times, it is an enormous undertaking.

This year, with the financial support of our circle of friends, our community partners and our valued membership, I believe we will accomplish many wonderful things. However, this belief also comes with the knowledge that at the end of the day, it remains critical that funding sources be in place to offset expenses otherwise, the branches in our garden could become compromised.

In 2008, as we continue to invest in creating memories together, I ask that you take a moment (*perhaps when your need is greatest, or perhaps when you no longer have need*) to recognize how fragile an untended garden can become without the attentive hands of caretakers. YOU are the reason we work so diligently, without fail and with purpose to ensure that the branches, the garden, and the soil remain rich. As caretakers we each play an important part in building and preserving our organization for many, many years to come.

Notice of Annual General MEETING

Are you interested in learning more about Breast Cancer Action's accomplishments in 2007 and our goals for 2008? Would you like to meet the volunteers and staff who are behind the development and delivery of our many programs and services? **IF SO, MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**

On Wednesday, May 21, 2008 you are invited to attend the Breast Cancer Action Annual General Meeting. Held in the lower level of St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Cathedral, the evening will feature a keynote speaker and an address to the audience by both the President and the Treasurer of BCA. The doors open to the public at 6:30pm with the meeting commencing at 7:00. Light refreshments will be served. Free parking is available on-site. *(Please visit our website in the coming weeks for further information.)*

BCA Information Evenings



In January and February of this year, with a focus on research in our community, Breast Cancer Action warmly welcomed Dr. John Bell and Dr. Luc Sabourin as guest speakers.

During the course of 2008, Breast Cancer Action will continue to focus on inviting representatives from the medical community to speak to our membership. In the interim, our membership is encouraged to periodically visit the BCA website for details on upcoming guest speakers.

APRIL Lunch and Learn Session

Wednesday, April 23, 2008—12:00 to 1:30pm
Held at Breast Cancer Action

FITNESS: Urban Poling

Urban poling (or nordic walking) is a fantastic new sport that uses specially designed walking poles that help add a great upper body and core workout to your walking routine. It is fun and ideal for all ages and fitness levels!

Join **Heather Pardon**, the owner of **Wild Daisy Fitness** during our April Lunch and Learn session. Heather enjoys sharing her passion for health and wellness and empowering others on their personal fitness journey. She specializes in one-on-one, in-home personal training services which emphasize expert advice and sound exercise technique. An avid power walker, having completed several marathons and half-marathons, Heather instructs other power walkers as well as many Nordic walking classes throughout Ottawa. She is also the local master trainer for a Nordic walking company, Urban Poling, and has been a member of FlyGurlz women's mountain bike team for over 10 years.

NOTE

Participation in all Lunch and Learn sessions are FREE to BCA members; however, space is limited to 10 people.

Please register early to avoid disappointment by calling Gloria at 736.5921, or via e-mail at info@bcaott.ca.



Photo submitted by Jennifer Caldbeck

Project UPDATE

Submitted by Stephanie Woodard

INTRODUCTION: For the past 9 years, Stephanie has been working with Dr. Roanne Segal and the Oncology Rehabilitation Program at the Ottawa Hospital Regional Cancer Centre as a cancer exercise specialist. Stephanie is the lead facilitator (instructor) for “Go With the Flow” BCA classes.



PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Dr. Margaret Farncombe

Anna Kennedy

Susan Smith

Louise Killens

Judy Bedell

Betty Flack

Maureen Manningham

PROJECT STAFF MEMBERS:

Caren Weinstein

Louise Haley

Stephanie Woodard

Marjorie Morrison

Gloria Bateson



The LYMPHEDEMA: Take Control project Breast Cancer Action has been buzzing about since receiving funding in 2007 has come together with a strong team of experts who are about to unveil two very exciting resources to further lymphedema awareness secondary to breast cancer in our community. The team is proud to be on the verge of releasing the first phase of “Go With the Flow” in the form of a BCA secondary exercise module.

The first component of this module refers to a comprehensive and user friendly “booklet” designed to educate those diagnosed with breast cancer relevant to lymphedema. Specifically, how to prevent or manage this condition using exercise, general tips on how to exercise safely and effectively with a beginner or advanced exercise program option. It is anticipated that this booklet (introduced by the class facilitator and available through class participation for the duration of the project) will further serve as a terrific resource for those wanting to exercise on their own, but unsure of exactly what to do outside of a class environment. The booklet is easy to follow offering a variety of exercises using minimal space and equipment—perfect as a compliment to your own home-based exercise routine!

The second component of the module refers to the weekly “Go With the Flow” group exercise classes beginning in April of this year in three satellite locations. Class participants will benefit by joining a class lead by an experienced cancer exercise specialist who will provide quality education and instruction on the best exercises to help prevent or manage lymphedema. These classes are more than just great cardiovascular, stretch and strength workouts—they offer an ideal atmosphere for extended social interaction. Designed specifically for those diagnosed with breast cancer in mind, the class climate will be one of *permission* meaning participants are welcome to exercise comfortably at their own pace with exercise options to meet all levels of health, fitness and wellness allowing them to leave each class feeling refreshed, both in mind and body!

SESSION TIMEFRAME / CLASS DETAILS: *Dovercourt Recreation Centre (Board Room)*
6:30pm-7:30pm
Tuesday, April 01,08,15,22,29
Tuesday, May 06, 13, 20

Rideau Tennis Club (LifeFIT Canada Studio)
9:00am-10:00am
Saturday, April 05,12,19,26
Saturday, May 03,10,24,31

Hunt Club Community Centre
1:00pm-2:00pm
Thursday, April 03,10,17,24
Thursday, May 01,08,15,22

REGISTRATION:

For the convenience of our membership, a registration form is enclosed with this newsletter. Additional forms may be obtained by calling BCA at (613) 736-5921, or by downloading from our website at www.bcaott.ca. (Please refer to the BCA website for the identified standards of eligibility for class participation as defined for the project.) Registrations accepted at any time.



Have you registered yet for the **5th Annual World Conference on Breast Cancer?**

Attend and hear Marjorie Morrison of Breast Cancer Action along with Anna Kennedy of the Lymphovenous Association of Ontario present to a global audience on **June 06th, 2008.** (11:15am-12:15pm)

Learn more about **LYMPHEDEMA: Take Control** while being part of an amazing event that you will remember for years to come.

To learn more, or to register, please visit **www.wbcfc.ca** today!

LIAN'S TAI CHI Classes with James Tam

"Core members of the class participants are also doing very well, quite knowledgeable of the Qigong exercises now and steadily advancing in their learning of the Tai Chi form."

JAMES TAM, CLASS INSTRUCTOR

Lian's Tai Chi Class Schedule

Saturday, April 5, 12, 19, 26
 Saturday, May 3, 10, 24, 31 [No class on May 17]
 Saturday, June 7, 14, 21, 28

(*Please note, Lian's Tai Chi Class will not be delivered during the summer months of July and August. Classes will resume in September.)

RIVER OF LIFE—The Yukon River Quest

REMEMBERING THE PADDLERS

Submitted by Fran MacKenzie, BCA Member

What a delightful evening of entertainment and excitement meeting breast cancer survivors who paddled their way on an emotional journey!

"River of Life," an excellent National Film Board movie, showed to an Ottawa audience of approximately 100 the arduous and physically challenging adventure these women undertook. Their heart was in promoting the ability of survivors to accomplish such a feat but also feeling the benefits of camaraderie with each other.

With the river so far north in the Yukon, it was still light at 10:00pm but the team kept paddling 'til dark. They paddled through a storm, cold and mild weather and through some tearful and exhausting moments.

It was a pleasure to meet and hear Mr. Larry Bagnell, MP from the Yukon whose presence gave the paddlers recognition for their perseverance. As breast cancer survivors, we appreciate the hard work being done by the Canadian Breast Cancer Network as it is our voice across Canada which needs to be heard.

2008 GOLF Tournament of HOPE



CALLING ALL GOLFERS!

The 2nd Annual Breast Cancer Action Golf Tournament of Hope will take place on Friday, August 08, 2008 at the Glen Mar Golf & Country Club located just minutes west of Stittsville. For information on registration, or to either sponsor a hole or to donate prizes, please contact Event Organizer and BCA member Marg Campbell at: golf@bcaott.ca.



PAINT OTTAWA PINK! in 2008

What Does it Truly Mean to be an Event Participant?

Submitted by Marjorie Morrison, Executive Director

This is the year I walk. Not for myself, but in recognition and in celebration of the spirit of our many BCA members who have left a lasting impression this past year. Women who have traveled internationally to climb the peaks of Mount Kilimanjaro, who have paddled the waters in Australia, and who have faced difficult chemo and radiation treatments with courage and determination. This year, I walk for them, and I walk with them.

For the past 15 years, our valued community friends, supporters and members have come together during the annual **Manulife Walk & Fun Run** held each year during the month of June. Sponsored by our corporate partner **Manulife Financial**, this event offers us a rare opportunity to lend our collective support to an organization that accomplishes so much. Last year, it was a sea of pink as participants came dressed in fantastic costumes, or sporting BCA pink t-shirts.

Looking back to 2005 when I first arrived at BCA, I recall how eagerly I accepted the task of organizing this annual event along with a core group of dedicated BCA volunteers and how, since that time, I have watched with pride and respect as loyal event participants continue to raise their voices and show their support year after year.

As with many of our participants, this day is very special to me. It has, in my eyes, become a day of celebration and strength, of unity and hope. Throughout the many BCA events I have attended in the past, I've often whispered words of gratitude as I've encountered new faces and I've given silent thanks to those who gathered in support of BCA. This event is no different.

As many of you know, while I often "wear a variety of different hats" as your Executive Director, I am a non-survivor. Admittedly, at times, I've pondered if there are some who feel this fact distances me because I have not experienced the emotional and physical challenges of a breast cancer diagnosis firsthand.

It is only through communication with BCA members and visitors to our centre that I have come to realize that although I have not navigated the breast cancer care pathway, I have nonetheless chosen to walk on a road of service that ultimately leads me in a parallel direction. Although there are, undoubtedly, many twists and turns to this road that I speak of, the direction I take ensures that I never lose sight of the distance we have traveled together, or the purpose by which BCA was founded all those years ago.

I speak with confidence when I state that BCA exists to serve our members, and our community.

This year, as our organizing committee began preparing for the 2008 **Manulife Walk & Fun Run**, I asked myself what it *truly meant* to participate in an event of this scope. Not surprisingly, I found the answer was right in front of me—I needed only to look to those who walk through our front door in need of support to realize that lending our voices and our support to the day means that we are investing in something that we believe in, and that we value. ...*We are investing in Breast Cancer Action.*

On Sunday, June 08, 2008, at the historic Rideau Canoe Club and in celebration of 15 years of serving our community, I invite each member of BCA and every individual whose life has been touched by a breast cancer diagnosis to join us as we walk, run, cycle and rollerblade in support of the organization that has come to mean so much to so many of us.

I believe that when we come together, we DO have the power to make a difference!



"Give me where to stand, and I will move the earth." Archimedes

UPDATE: DRAGON BOAT Program

Submitted by Margaret Jaekl and Nancy Connolly

BCA's *Busting Out* Dragon Boat team held our Annual General Meeting on January 15, 2008.

The new Dragon Boat Executive is as follows:

Team Coordinator – Margaret Jaekl
Secretary – Sandra Stafford
Treasurer – Sylvia Walton
Fundraising/Sponsorship - Nancy Connolly
Communication – Kim Meloche
Membership/Teambuilding – Mary Vaive
Equipment and Supplies – Susan Burns-McIntyre
Race Coordinator – Janet Alexander
Fitness – Lisa Krug/Alice McClymont

The team voted to attend the following festivals in 2008:

Peterborough – June 14
Ottawa – June 21-22
Dartmouth – July 25-27
Burlington, Vermont – Aug. 2-3
Toronto – September 6-7, and
Carleton Place – September 13

In addition, members will be training for participation in River Run, a 27 km. paddle on the Grand River on October 11.

Busting Out participated with Breast Cancer Action with information tables at the screening of "*River of Life*" as a benefit for the Canadian Breast Cancer Network on March 11th and had the opportunity to meet some of the Yukon paddlers who were the subject of the film.

In April we will be trying to perfect our paddling technique at the R.C.M.P. pool in preparation for getting back on the water in May.

EVER THOUGHT ABOUT DRAGON BOATING?

If you want to improve your fitness level, have completed treatment for breast cancer and want to experience something new and exciting while making new friends, you should try **BUSTING OUT**. Now is the time to think about joining our team. If you think paddling might be for you, come out to our *Orientation Evening* for new and prospective members to find out how much fun it is. It will take place on the evening of April 30 at B.C.A. Pre-registration is required; please contact Barbara MacIntosh at bmacinto@ncran.gc.ca or 613-943-0234(w) or 613-831-7262(h) for more information.

**NEW MEMBERS ARE
ALWAYS WELCOME!**



National Volunteer Week — April 27 to May 03, 2008

National Volunteer Week began in 1943 as a volunteer recruitment effort to enlist women for wartime voluntary service. The concept of a week devoted to volunteers was revived during the late 1960s. Now every year registered charities and not-for-profit organizations across Canada pause to thank and recognize their volunteers. Each year during National Volunteer Week, Breast Cancer Action gives special honor and recognition to our valued volunteers who donate their time and energy to this organization. As an organization driven primarily by volunteers, Breast Cancer Action acknowledges that VOLUNTEERS are

the KEY to our success. In recognition of the value of volunteerism, and to all those who generously give their time, energy and skills to our organization, we extend a warm and heartfelt thank you.

Currently, there are a number of positions in need of special volunteers. For those who wish to discuss how they might contribute, or to learn the specifics of the roles, please feel free to contact Marjorie Morrison via e-mail at mmorrison@bcaott.ca, or by telephone at (613) 736-5921.

JOURNEY BACK

Life can change so fast.

It was Monday night, November 28, 2005. We had our house up for sale and decided to improve its selling appeal by replacing the carpet in our living room, dining room, stairs, upstairs hallway and kids' bedrooms. My husband and I planned to do the grunt work ourselves to save a little money by removing the furniture, ripping up the old carpet and under padding and painting the baseboards—all in the evening the night before the carpet installers were to arrive.

Earlier that day, I tried to cancel an evening appointment for an annual check-up with my doctor so we could work at the house. I was encouraged not to cancel the appointment. I had a bad feeling about this because I had had a mammogram and ultrasound one month earlier and a needle biopsy of a lump on the right breast one week prior. That evening, I took my husband with me to the appointment. We entered the room at 7:30 p.m. It turned out to be the results of the recent biopsy instead of the annual check-up. I had breast cancer in the right breast and would require surgery before Christmas. I was to see a surgeon in two days.

We drove home from the doctor's office in a state of shock. We were both numb. There were lots of tears. Was I going to die? How could this happen? I had a mammogram and ultrasound back in January and both were negative. The mammogram that was done just one month prior was negative. Now I was told I had stage 2 cancer.



We found the lump by touch and the ultrasound confirmed the lump. The lump felt like touching a small pea. It turned out to be 1.1 cm in size. The needle biopsy confirmed the cancer. The

mammograms detected nothing, not even a 1.1 cm mass! Apparently they do not work very well for women with dense breasts.

When we arrived home, we continued with our duties for the evening. There wasn't time to contact the carpet installers to cancel or postpone. So, we got busy with our planned tasks. We finished the living room and dining room that evening. We cried a lot, hugged each other and worked very hard. The physical part helped to keep our minds busy. Early the next morning, we completed the rest of the work. We told our children what we were facing, and they were very courageous

Breast Cancer Action is pleased to share PART TWO of the Genevieve Allen story in the SUMMER issue of our newsletter.

Submitted by Genevieve Allen. Genevieve works in the Office of Energy Efficiency as an administrative officer, and is a member of BCA. In 2005, Genevieve was diagnosed with breast cancer. This is her story.

and helpful. Our daughter Mandy was 16 and our son Bruce was 21 at the time.

Meeting an Angel

The carpet company arrived at 10:00 a.m. We left them to do their work as we drove to the Breast Cancer Centre at the Ottawa Hospital, Civic Campus to pick up the X-rays for the surgeon's appointment the next day. With X-rays in hand, we stood in the elevator crying. As we left the elevator, a lady turned to us and wrapped her arms around me and let me cry. She said she had just been told she was five years cancer free. She comforted me for several minutes. I felt much better. She was my first angel. I met many angels throughout my journey. Weeks later, she dedicated a song to us on the radio wishing both of us well in our journey.

We met the surgeon and were told that I would need a mastectomy, chemotherapy, radiation and hormone therapy such as Tamoxifen. Many tests followed over the next few days. I read as much as I could to get informed. This was a new area for me. I attacked it like a project. I am not sure when the feeling of dying went away, but I am sure it was sometime during those few days.

The surgery, a full mastectomy of the right breast, was performed on December 6, 2005, only eight days after we were first told of the cancer. It was a day surgery only. However, I found myself being rushed to emergency by ambulance the following morning because of extremely low blood pressure caused by the pain medication. They kept me for the day and put me on intravenous. I returned to emergency again the following day due to fluid build up throughout my body. After seven hours and four doctors, they sent me home and told me it was not a concern. Emergency is not set up to know and understand complications of surgery. If only they kept you a few days after surgery to keep an eye on any possible complications that might occur.

Radiation and Chemotherapy

I met my radiation and chemotherapy oncologists early in January 2006. They were very nice and informative but when they gave me the list of possible side effects of their treatments, I panicked. Was the cure worse than the disease? I hated taking medicine and avoided it most of the time. What was I going to do? I was then told that I had had 15 lymph nodes removed and one of the 15 was positive. They checked me to see if I was HER 2 positive and I was not. This helps determine the type of treatment you go on and the aggressiveness of the cancer. I had six rounds of chemotherapy—a very strong mix of three different “cocktails” given by intravenous every 21 days.

(...to be continued in the next issue.)

In(side) The Pink: One Woman's Account of Life Inside the Pink Ribbon World



ABOVE PHOTO:
Susan's peach fuzz
3 1/2 months after the
end of chemo.

HAIR!

*"Gimme head
with hair, Long
beautiful hair,
Shining, gleaming,
Streaming, flaxen,
waxen –
Hair!"*

(from "Hair")

Susan C. Gates, *Columnist,* is a former policy analyst and an Ottawa writer. She was diagnosed with Stage 2B ductal breast cancer in March of 2005.

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From the earliest times and throughout the arts and media, hair has been a defining trait of feminine beauty. Venus de Milo, Mona Lisa, even Picasso's beauties have long, shiny, flowing hair. Men may judge women based on specific body part preferences, but personally I think women judge other women by their hair. What else explains the thousands of hours and dollars we spend in salons and drugstores?

So when you get breast cancer and pursue treatment, not only will one of your sexual organs be mutilated, you're probably going to lose your hair.

I'm not model-pretty. No men have ever fought a crazed duel, besotted by my beauty. But, I liked my breasts and my hair. Sure, they both could have benefited from a bit more body & bounce, but I was definitely vain about them.

I struggled with the need for a mastectomy, but I was utterly distraught when my hair fell out — right on schedule.

I'd heeded the advice to shop early for a wig, finding one that looked so much like me most people couldn't tell the difference. I'd scooped up chemo caps, pulled out scarves and shopped for hats. I even overcame my fear of punctures to finally get my ears pierced, because as every woman knows, the secret to high style is to divert attention away from any 'faults'. Big, colourful, swinging earrings might blind others to my missing tresses. Ha!

In an attempt to exercise some measure of control, I'd made an appointment to have my head shaved just days before the predicted HLD (Hair Loss Date — usually 10 - 14 days after your first chemo session). As it turned out, my boyfriend chose

the day before this scheduled act of bravery, to dump me. My bravura left me.

Luckily, a friend blew off work to hold my hand. My stylist refused to shave my head (A great blessing as I later learned how much itchier a wig would be to wear atop a scalp of bristles!). Instead he gave me the cutest hair cut of my life - a 1" long pixie cut — utterly charming with a tan and those earrings. It lasted five days.

Then it rained hair.

Clumps on my pillow, sprinkles on and in my nightgown, wet wads in the shower. I couldn't look. If my sister hadn't been staying with me, I swear my shower drain would have clogged in three days. I just couldn't bring myself to clean the drain and the tub and toss out my hair.

There weren't many days I cried, but the days it rained hair I did. Nothing had prepared me for how I felt about the loss of my hair. It was June, so it wasn't long before I'd discovered the silver lining. I've inherited my mother's hips and my father's thick body hair. Summers for me can mean twice-a-day leg- shaving and bikini-waxes.

So while I mourned the loss of my shiny, thick head of hair, I began to revel in the freedom from foam gels, razor blades, wax strips and tweezers! No hesitation about jumping in the lake or accepting a pool party invitation, hoping my esthetician could fit me in for an appointment beforehand.

I did have to learn how to draw an eyebrow. "The Look Good Feel Better" workshop was great for this lesson as were the words of advice from fair-feathered friends.

Throughout that summer I wore my wig only for 'public' events like weddings. Even then, if it was hot & humid, I'd often be more comfortable in a scarf and stylish hat. When Fall came (or even in places with A/C), a bald head is mighty cold! Then I wore my wig more often and loved the knitted caps for the comforting warmth they brought.

One day during a support group meeting when most of us were bald, I made a startling discovery. We all looked more feminine. Instead of focussing on our hair, I'd noticed curves, smiles, caring words.

At the end of chemo, I had no eyelashes and only 5 eyebrow hairs. I plucked them. I was 90 % bald, but the few hairs that had stuck with me had grown. I looked like an alcoholic street person in full liver failure. This time, it was the dog groomer who agreed to shave my head. She buzzed me, giving my scalp a clean slate for the regrowth. And regrow it does! Mine came in curly, something I'd never experienced without a perm. And the dilemma about how to stop dyeing my almost black hair without looking like a freak for eight months was solved. After my second hair cut, the curls were gone, but I had gleaming, tinsel-coloured hair.

And oh yes, I'm back to shaving, waxing & plucking. The body is an amazing thing. Even the hair on my arms is the same length it was before chemo.

It's a trauma — losing your hair. No doubt about it. However, I now know that being a woman is far more intrinsic than superficial — as the world would let us believe. Hair is beautiful, but not as much as a woman's soul and her strength.

Our Statement of Principles:

P A G E | 1

Mission Fulfillment. Breast Cancer Action strives to achieve mission fulfillment by focusing on strengthening the organization in order to meet the changing needs and growing expectations of our audience.

Effective Stewardship. Breast Cancer Action assures effective stewardship by maintaining effective governance and management, and by generating and managing resources in a wise and responsible manner.

Quality. Breast Cancer Action strives to improve quality by working toward achieving excellence in all aspects of the organization, and by evaluating the total organization and its outcomes on a regular basis.

Leadership. Breast Cancer Action provides leadership by adopting and promoting inclusiveness and diversity through services, programs, initiatives and activities, and by proactively educating the public.

Our Guiding Principles:

Commitment. Breast Cancer Action strives to operate in a manner that serves the best interest of the organization, with consideration given to the needs of the membership, our stakeholders and the community.

Inclusion. Breast Cancer Action strives to implement broad-based decision making practices that best reflect the needs and expectations of our members, stakeholders and the community.

Diversity. Breast Cancer Action respects and values differences among our membership and stakeholders, and believes that diverse populations can be advantageous.

Transparency. Breast Cancer Action promotes openness regarding our vision, mission and mandate.

Integrity. Breast Cancer Action remains committed to providing our members, stakeholders and the community with information, care and support to the best of our abilities.

Effectiveness: As an organization often faced with difficult choices based on limited resources, Breast Cancer Action will strive to achieve maximum results with what resources are available.

What's UP NEXT Summary

March 31 to April 14— Maxwell's Bistro "Champions for Charity" Event

April through May—"GO WITH THE FLOW" exercise classes

April 23—Urban Poling Lunch and Learn Session (12:00-1:30)

May 08—Lymphedema Workshop (7:00-9:30)

May 10—STEPPING OUT: A Women's Health & Wellness Day, St. Elias

May 21—Annual General Meeting, St. Elias (7:00-9:00)

June 08—Manulife Walk & Fun Run PAINT OTTAWA PINK! (9:00-1:00)

June 16—Lymphedema Workshop (1:00-3:30)

August 08—2nd Annual Golf Tournament of HOPE



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**"I light my candle
from their torches."**

Richard Burton