



# Maine Breast Cancer Coalition News & Views

Spring/Summer 2007

[www.mainebreastcancer.org](http://www.mainebreastcancer.org)

1-800-928-2644

## ***New Maine Specialty License Plate to Benefit Breast Cancer Services***

An exciting effort is under way to create a new Maine specialty license plate. Maine LD 775 "An Act to Create a Special License Plate to Support Breast Cancer Services" has been introduced in the Maine State Legislature.

The proceeds from this specialty plate will be split equally between three beneficiaries: the **Maine Breast Cancer Coalition** for our **Support Service Fund**; the **Maine Cancer Foundation** for their Women's Cancer Research Fund; the **Maine Breast and Cervical Health Program** for their Mammogram Fund.

The deadline for reaching the required 2,000 pre-reservations is December 31, 2007. This would allow for production of the plate to begin in October 2008. So far nearly 600 plates have been reserved, so we have a long way to go!

Visit the Maine Cancer Foundation website at [www.maineccancer.org](http://www.maineccancer.org) for detailed information and a license plate reservation form.

## ***Breast Cancer and the Environment: What Are the Connections?***

We have devoted a large portion of this newsletter to the issue of breast cancer and the environment. Now, more than ever, we need to find environmental causes of breast cancer so this disease can be prevented.

This can only be accomplished through a collaborative effort by the scientific community, breast cancer activists, government, and ordinary citizens who take actions that will make a difference. The articles on pages one and two offer ideas to help you educate yourself about breast cancer and the environment, influence government policy, or join a study.

## **College Students Spread the Word about Environmental Links to Breast Cancer**

A new, multimedia CD features information about how the environment can affect breast cancer risk. The "Vassar College Environmental Risks and Breast Cancer CD" is an information resource developed by a team of faculty, students, and technical professionals from Vassar College with guidance and scientific review by Silent Spring Institute ([www.silentspring.org](http://www.silentspring.org)) researchers.

The CD explores some of the important, and potentially controllable, risks in our environment that have been implicated in the high rate of breast cancer. The CD creators' goal is to empower personal and community choices to decrease exposures to substances that may increase breast cancer risk.

"Known breast cancer risk factors explain about half of the cases of breast cancer. That means that we don't know what's causing the other 50 percent of breast cancer diagnoses. Scientific evidence increasingly shows that preventable, environmental exposures may be playing a role," according to Janet Gray, the project director, a professor in the Department of Psychology, and the director of the Program in Science, Technology & Society at Vassar College. She added, "these exposures may come from products we use routinely, including personal care products, detergents, pesticides and herbicides, products made from flexible plastics, and PVCs and other commonly used plastics."

She hopes that "the CD will be a tool that provides easily accessible information about the links between the environment and breast cancer and inspires individuals to make changes to decrease exposures for themselves, their children, and future generations."

Jessica Schifano, one of the first Vassar students to collaborate with Dr. Gray in developing the CD, is now working at Silent Spring while pursuing a dual degree in law and public health from Northeastern and Tufts Universities, respectively. Ms. Schifano notes, "developing the CD strengthened my interest in environmental risks and breast cancer. I feel very fortunate that I was able to intern at Silent Spring Institute the summer between my junior and senior years. Not only did this experience make me well equipped to do my part on the CD, but also it increased my interest in this field. Following graduation, I was lucky enough to return to Silent Spring to continue with this work while pursuing my graduate studies."

The CD includes a review of the role the environment and a woman's reproductive history play in breast cancer risk. It also offers practical suggestions on how to minimize exposures to compounds suspected of increasing risk.

The Environmental Risks and Breast Cancer CD was featured in the October 2006 issue of *Vogue*. Each CD includes both an English and Spanish version. For more information visit [www.erbc.vassar.edu](http://www.erbc.vassar.edu). (source: Silent Spring Inst. press release)

## **The Sister Study**

### **A Critically Important Study to Find the Environmental and Genetic Causes of Breast Cancer**

*Did your sister have breast cancer?*

*Do you wish you could do more to support her struggle...or to honor her life?*

***Help find the causes. Join the Sister Study.***

The Sister Study is a long-term study that will help us learn how the environment and genes affect the chances of getting breast cancer. It is critical that women from all races and ethnic groups join the study so that the results benefit all women.

**You can help the Sister Study reach its goal of 50,000 enrolled women by the end of 2007.**

*You are eligible to join if:*

- Your sister (living or deceased), related to you by blood, had breast cancer.
- You are between the ages of 35 and 74.
- You have never had breast cancer yourself.

No medicine, medical treatments, or changes to habits, diet or daily life are required for study participants.

You can join the study or find out more by calling 1-877-4-SISTER (1-877-474-7837) or visit [www.sisterstudy.org](http://www.sisterstudy.org).

If you are not eligible for the study, please pass this information on to someone who is.

### ***Breast Cancer Diaries Documentary Film:*** **Bangor Showing on June 6**

“The Breast Cancer Diaries” documentary film is an intimate, unvarnished, first person account of a young Maine mother’s nine-month journey with breast cancer, punctuated with humor, poignancy and romance. It provides a real-time portrayal of the unique issues and juggling act that face the more than 250,000 women under the age of 40 living with breast cancer in America.

On **Wednesday, June 6th at 6:30 pm**, “The Breast Cancer Diaries” will be shown at the Bangor Y (YWCA) at 17 Second Street in Bangor. This critically acclaimed film was written and lived by Ann Murray Paige, photographed and directed by Linda Pattillo, produced by Linda, Ann and Kate Nelligan. A discussion with Ann and Linda will follow the film.

For more information about the Breast Cancer Diaries project go to [www.thebreastcancerdiaries.com](http://www.thebreastcancerdiaries.com).

*This presentation is hosted by Caring Connections – a cooperative women’s health program of the Bangor Y and Eastern Maine Medical Center – and is made possible by grants from the Maine Affiliate – Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the Maine Cancer Foundation.*

## **Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act**

National Breast Cancer Coalition successfully launched a campaign to increase co-sponsorship of the “Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act” (S. 579/H.R. 1157) by Mother’s Day. More than half the members of Congress, including all our Maine senators and congressmen, have shown their support by cosponsoring this critical legislation.

In a recent issue of the scientific journal, *Cancer*, three systematic literature reviews were published that summarize the existing evidence for links between environmental factors and breast cancer. One review focused on compiling a list of chemicals that have been found to cause cancer in animals, while the other two reviews focused on human studies of diet and environmental pollutants (e.g. air pollution, drinking water contaminants, pesticides) and the evidence for such links with breast cancer. These three review articles are helpful in identifying environmental factors for which evidence exists, and research questions that have been addressed. But more importantly, these reviews found a lack of studies on many potential environmental causes of breast cancer.

The *Cancer* study highlights the need for increased federal investment in research to explore these links. The “Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act” would establish an overall approach to these difficult questions, by identifying both gaps in the current knowledge base and promising avenues of research. It will bring together the scientific disciplines and research institutions necessary to conduct complicated environmental studies. This legislation will establish a competitive, peer-reviewed grant program involving trained consumers in the decision-making process. It would authorize \$40 million over 5 years for the Director of the National Institutes of Health to award grants to conduct multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary research through a national network of collaborative centers. To find out more, visit the National Breast Cancer Coalition website at [www.stopbreastcancer.org](http://www.stopbreastcancer.org).

## Promising Cancer Research Reported at NBCC Annual Advocacy Conference

The *National Breast Cancer Coalition's* Annual Advocacy Conference, held in April in Washington D.C., featured presentations by many prominent cancer researchers. Among these distinguished researchers, Dr. Max Wicha, Director of the University of Michigan Cancer Center, presented exciting new findings from cancer stem cell research being conducted at the U. Michigan Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The research is focused on adult stem cells present in malignant tumors. These are referred to as "cancer stem cells", which are responsible for triggering the uncontrolled growth of cells that leads to cancer. Cancer stem cells have already been identified in many types of cancer, including breast cancer. University of Michigan researchers were the first to identify stem cells in solid tumors, finding them in breast cancer.

The researchers hope that by identifying these cells, drugs can be developed to target and kill these cells. "This discovery, combined with other research to detect the genetic defects underlying cancer, is driving the development of new, individualized therapies," according to Dr. Wicha. "By targeting the right molecular pathways in the right cells in the right people, we can envision a day when treatment will be tailored to each patient's unique cancer."

For detailed information about Dr. Wicha's presentation, go to NBCC's website at [www.stopbreastcancer.org](http://www.stopbreastcancer.org). Click on "2007 Annual Advocacy Conference", then click on "Plenary and Workshop Presentations."

## MBCC Support Service Fund News

The MBCC **Support Service Fund** provides financial assistance for breast health or breast cancer related services and items to underserved people in Maine. The Fund assists low-income, uninsured, or underinsured people who don't qualify for, or whose particular needs aren't covered by other assistance programs. Since the Fund began in 2000, we have awarded grants to more than 750 Maine residents who had nowhere else to turn for assistance.

So far this year we have received applications for financial assistance from 63 Maine women and one man. We have granted requests for mammograms and readings, breast ultrasound, physician co-payments, hospital bills, prescriptions, lymphedema compression garments, wigs, assistance with travel expenses to treatments, living expenses assistance for people in active treatment, and many other items and services.

To find out more or to apply for a grant call Maine Breast Cancer Coalition toll free at 1-800-928-2644 or download an easy-to-complete application from our web site at [www.mainebreastcancer.org](http://www.mainebreastcancer.org)

### How You Can Help

The **Support Service Fund** is only partially supported by grants from major foundations. MBCC relies on contributions from local groups or individuals.

If your community group, business, or organization would like to dedicate all or part of the proceeds from a fundraising effort to the Support Service Fund, contact grants chairperson Chris Haiss at 207-938-4018 or [czh@tdstelme.net](mailto:czh@tdstelme.net).

Or please consider a tax-deductible donation of any amount. See the donation and membership form on the back page of this newsletter for details.

*MBCC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.*

## MBCC Support Service Fund Receives Major Grants

Maine Breast Cancer Coalition is pleased to announce we have received two major grants, one from the **Susan G. Komen For the Cure Foundation, Maine Affiliate** and the other from the **Maine Cancer Foundation**.

The **Susan G. Komen For the Cure Foundation, Maine Affiliate** ([www.komenmaine.com](http://www.komenmaine.com)) \$35,000 grant provides funds for grants to qualified applicants to our **Support Service Fund**, but also supports our low administrative costs, which are held to a minimum by our all-volunteer committee who administer the fund. For the seventh consecutive year the Maine Komen Foundation Affiliate has awarded us a generous grant.

The **Maine Cancer Foundation** ([www.maineccancer.org](http://www.maineccancer.org)) \$9,000 grant is designated for people who have been diagnosed with breast cancer and qualify for a grant from our **Support Service Fund**. This is the fifth year the Maine Cancer Foundation has recognized and supported our commitment to assist Maine people diagnosed with breast cancer.

These two grants take us well on our way to raising the nearly \$75,000 we plan to award in 2007.

We gratefully acknowledge the Susan G. Komen For the Cure, Maine Affiliate and the Maine Cancer Foundation for again supporting our work.

*We recently received individual donations for the Support Service Fund from:*

**Elizabeth Byard**

**Morag Robertson**

**Thomas Scott Concannon**

*Thank you for your generous contributions!*

## Free Informational Program on Breast Reconstruction Offered in Bangor and Ellsworth

David Branch, M.D., of Bangor Plastic & Hand Surgery, will be the guest speaker at two free lectures about breast reconstruction and the new "DIEP" flap or "Deep Inferior Epigastric Artery Perforator". This free informational program will be held at the following dates and locations:

### Tuesday, June 12th at 5:30 pm

Isaac Farrar Mansion  
Bangor Y  
17 Second St.

### Saturday, June 30th at 11:30 am

Beth Wright Cancer Resource Center  
Ellsworth

Please RSVP at 941-2808 x 337 or 338 as seating is limited. All interested persons are welcome to attend.

*Brought to you by Caring Connections & ENCOREplus – a women's health program of the Bangor Y and Eastern Maine Medical Center and the support of HealthCare Charities.*

### Maine Breast Cancer Coalition's Mission

*Maine Breast Cancer Coalition is dedicated to making a difference in the health of Maine people through:*

**Financial Support** for underserved people with breast cancer or breast health needs

**Advocacy** for breast cancer research and legislation

**Education** to promote knowledge about breast cancer and quality care

### Join Us!

If you are receiving this newsletter and are not yet a member of the *Maine Breast Cancer Coalition*, please consider joining us. Membership is only \$15 for individuals or \$100 for business, organization, or corporate memberships. Please send us the membership form on this page (or a photocopy). Or consider becoming an active member. We meet the second Wednesday of every other month from 5:45 to 7:30 P.M. at MaineGeneral Hospital in Waterville. Call 1-800-928-2644 first to confirm meeting dates.

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**Yes!** *I want to support the Maine Breast Cancer Coalition's work.*

- I want to be active in the *Maine Breast Cancer Coalition*. Please contact me.
- I want to become a member of *MBCC*. Enclosed is a check for \$15 (individual) or \$100 (business or organization membership) payable to *MBCC*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (eve.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

- I want to make a tax-deductible contribution. Enclosed is a check payable to *MBCC* for \$ \_\_\_\_\_.  
In honor/memory of \_\_\_\_\_
- I want to donate the following gifts or services:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your check for membership and/or contribution with this form to:

Maine Breast Cancer Coalition  
11 Bangor Mall Blvd. Suite D  
PMB 362  
Bangor, ME 04401-3650

