

# Breast and GYN Health Project

A Cancer Resource Center

information, support, and hope

# Spring 2016 Newsletter

Vol. 17 Issue 1  
Twice Annual Newsletter

## Genes, Genetics & Genomics

By Mary Meengs, MD, Medical Consultant

Perhaps you've just been diagnosed with breast cancer, and your doctor says they want to do genomic testing before determining optimal treatment. Then another doctor suggests that you have genetic testing to help with treatment decisions. Are they talking about the same thing? We've put this topic off for a long time. It's confusing and complicated, but it is stubbornly standing its ground at the forefront of current medical research and relevance. It's everywhere, right? Especially if you have cancer or work in health care. So, let's try to clear things up a bit.

Every cell in our body contains, in its nucleus, the same 23 pairs of chromosomes, which are tightly coiled and clumped strands of a molecule called DNA. Think of each chromosome as a volume from your personal encyclopedia set. Let's look at "Volume M".

Each chromosome contains many genes, which are sections of DNA. Genes contain the coded instructions to make proteins that determine the structure and function of every cell in the body. We have two copies of every gene, one from each parent. So our "Volume M" example contains genes (think "articles") with information on everything from Marshmallows to Monticello to Music. Each of us has 50,000 to 100,000 genes, in every cell. Amazing.

Genes hold the instructions for everything from the color of our eyes to how well we digest our sandwich. They also tell cells how to develop, and when to die. Genes contain instructions about whether to be turned "on" or "off" depending on location. That's why fingernails generally grow where they're supposed to.

A mutation is a spelling or grammar error in a gene. The result of this error may have major or minor consequences: Monticello in Montana instead of Virginia? White marshmallows or pink? These errors can be in the gene you inherited from your parent, or can be acquired any time in your life. We even have genes to proofread themselves and try to correct some errors.

Two of the most well-known genes are BRCA-1 and -2, short for BREast CANcer. These genes provide instructions for making a protein that acts as a tumor suppressor, preventing

Continued page 2

### 4 DESTINATIONS ~ 4 WINNERS

15<sup>th</sup> Annual  
**VACATION BENEFIT Raffle**



Breast and GYN Health Project  
A Cancer Resource Center  
(Formerly Humboldt Community Breast Health Project)

Tickets available at BGHP:  
(707) 825-8345

Tickets \$10 each 3/\$25 7/\$50 15/\$100  
40/\$250 100/\$500 225/\$1000

Drawing June 10, 2016 · 8 p.m. · Arcata Exchange  
Need not be present to win

MORE INFO AT: [WWW.HCBHP.ORG](http://WWW.HCBHP.ORG)

Proceeds support the Breast and GYN Health Project, which offers services to those with breast or gynecologic cancer concerns. All proceeds stay local.



**HAWAII'S BIG ISLAND**  
Seven nights with airfare for two



**BANFF, ALBERTA**  
Seven nights with airfare for two



**ASHLAND, OR**  
Two nights for two



**TRINIDAD, CA**  
Two nights for two

### THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!






Cloney's Pharmacy · Forbusco Lumber & Building Supply · George Petersen Insurance Agency  
Patterson Connors Insurance · Recology Humboldt County · Almquist Lumber Company  
Brandt Easter Photography · EPT - Eureka Physical Therapy · Hunter, Hunter & Hunt, LLP, CPAs  
Jackson & Eklund, CPAs · Lima's Professional Pharmacy · Paul "PJ" Nicholson State Farm Ins.  
Pierson Building Center · Sarah Lauderdale & Curt Cooper · Arcata Exchange · Bug Press  
Dalaines World Wide Travel · North Coast Growers Association · Scrapper's Edge






The beauty of the vacation raffle is the outstanding efforts of volunteers selling raffle tickets to those they know or meet in the community. Not only is this an incredible fundraiser, but it raises awareness about the value of our services to people who might need help.

Can you help sell a packet of 15 tickets? Or, table at the Farmers' Market? Call 825-8345 if you can!

Postage/printing costs donated by the Humboldt Independent Practice Association

Continued from page 1 - "Genes, Genetics & Genomics"

cells from growing and dividing too rapidly or in an uncontrolled way. They do this by interacting with other proteins to mend breaks in DNA. Damage to DNA can be caused by an error during cell division, or by various environmental toxins. So I think of the BRCA genes as the trauma surgeons for DNA. What if these genes themselves are damaged? Yikes. So far researchers have identified several thousand different mutations in the BRCA genes. If you inherit one of these mutations, it becomes more possible for critical cellular mistakes to go unchecked, and for breast, ovarian, or other cancers to develop.

There are other genes which have been discovered to impact breast cancer risk if they contain a mutation: CHEK-2, ATM, p53, and more. These are even rarer than BRCA 1 & 2. Altogether, inherited genetic mutations are thought to cause just 5 to 10% of breast cancers.

Genetics is defined as the study of genes, their effects, and their role in inheritance. Genetic testing usually means you are being checked for mutations in one or several specific known genes, which have been identified with a certain disease or an increased risk for a disease. A genetics expert knows the common patterns of inheritance, as well as the known gene mutations, and by studying your personal and family medical history can recommend which, if any, genetic tests you should have.

Genomics is a newer term that refers to the study of all of a person's genes, and how they interact with each other and with the person's environment. The World Health Organization states that "genetics scrutinizes the functioning and composition of the single gene, whereas genomics addresses all genes and their inter-relationships in order to identify their combined influence on the growth and development of an organism".

Continued on next column

#### **BGHP Staff:**

Executive Director - Rose Gale-Zoellick, MSW, MPH  
Client Services Director - Lisa Petterson, RN  
Medical Consultants - Julie Ohnemus, MD & Mary Meengs, MD  
Client Services Coordinator - Brenda Elvine-Kreis  
Office Manager - Barbara Sage  
Volunteer Coordinator/Resource Asst. - Beth Gaughan  
Breast Health Navigator - Madelin Amir, NP  
GYN Cancer Support Group Facilitator-Rebecca Zettler, RN  
RBCSS Assistant - Bojan Ingle  
RN Latina Patient Navigator - Isabelle Robles  
ERV Outreach Liaison - Robin Rocha

#### **BGHP Board of Directors:**

**Officers:** Chris Martinek-President, Laura McEwen-Vice President, Steve Engle-Treasurer, Elizabeth Wardell-Secretary  
**Board:** Peggy Buchanan, Nancy Dean, Amy Eastman, Paula Fredrickson, Kate S. Green, Katie Hamilton Gentry, Lorey Keele, Joan Rainwater-Gish, Melinda Wilson

A practical example of genomic testing some of us are familiar with is the OncoType DX test. In this test, a piece of breast cancer tumor is analyzed for the pattern of genes in its DNA, and this information is compared with the patterns in other known tumors. This gives useful information about the likely behavior of the tumor and which treatments would be most appropriate.

If you are now more confused than ever, please accept my apologies and consider looking into these references. A future newsletter article will go into more detail about recommendations for genetic testing and dealing with a known mutation.

[www.ghr.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ghr.nlm.nih.gov) Genetics Home Reference---Your Guide to Understanding Genetic Conditions

[www.news-medical.net/life-sciences](http://www.news-medical.net/life-sciences) "What are genes?"

[www.genome.gov/health](http://www.genome.gov/health) genetics and genomics for patients and the public, FAQ about genetic and genomic science

[www.breastcancer.org/risk/factors/genetics](http://www.breastcancer.org/risk/factors/genetics)

Check out these resources and more  
on our recently expanded website  
**[www.bghp.org](http://www.bghp.org)**



#### **From the Executive Director**

Rose Gale-Zoellick

As a small grassroots cancer resource organization, we are very aware of organizations practicing aggressive telemarketing and direct mail practices that are very confusing. Unfortunately some of our generous supporters were scammed into thinking they were donating to our local non-profit. The organizations the Federal Trade Commission shut down earlier this year were The Breast Cancer Society, Cancer Fund of America, Children's Cancer Fund of America and Cancer Support Services.

Breast and GYN Health Project values our supporters. We do not engage in telephone solicitations nor do we buy or sell our donors' information. If you are ever unsure about who is calling asking for money or sending you strange-looking donation requests in the mail, please trust your instincts and say no to them. Be 100% certain who is receiving your hard-earned money. Feel free to contact me or check out the organization's name through an on-line resource like Charity Navigator or Guidestar. If you are concerned that there might be a cancer-related fundraising scam happening, I'd like to hear from you!

I am so thankful for the generous support of donors and volunteers who have helped us serve over 2,500 clients, for free, during our 19 years of service to the community. I hope you will continue your tremendous support. Always feel free to contact me at 707-825-8345 x-110 or at [rosegz@hcbhp.org](mailto:rosegz@hcbhp.org).



## Rural Breast Cancer Survival Study Pilot Study Results Shared at Community Forums

By Brenda Elvine-Kreis, MA, RBCSS Co-Principal Investigator, and BGHP Client Services Coordinator

We have been working on an 18-month pilot community-based participatory research study funded by the California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP). This study is in collaboration with Humboldt State University's California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP). The primary goal of the Rural Breast Cancer Survival Study, [www.rbcss.org](http://www.rbcss.org), was to begin investigating factors that may contribute to Humboldt County's high breast cancer mortality rate compared to other counties in the state. Interestingly, the number of women who develop breast cancer in Humboldt County has actually been slightly *below* the state incidence rate.

CCRP recently completed analysis of 21 years of California Cancer Registry data. They have prepared a report about factors associated with decreased survival from breast cancer in Humboldt County.

The RBCSS's Community Liaisons will host Community Forums throughout Humboldt County where the study findings will be shared. The scheduled forums are:

- Thursday, April 21<sup>st</sup> 5:30 p.m. Eureka Community Health Center, 2200 Tydd Street, Eureka
- Monday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 6:00 p.m. Redwood Playhouse, Garberville
- Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> 6:30 p.m. at Fortuna's Rohner Recreation Hall, Rohner Park, Fortuna
- Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m. Spanish Speakers Forum at Eureka Community Health Center
- Meetings will also take place in Hoopa and at UIHS Potawot.

To find out more information about the study, including the results, check out the study website at [www.rbcss.org](http://www.rbcss.org). If you do not have internet access, please call me at 707-825-8345 x-125.



*Co-Principal Investigators: Terry Uyeki, CCRP, Director of Evaluation and Community Services, and Brenda Elvine-Kreis, BGHP Client Services Coordinator.*

*Photo Courtesy of the Times Standard.*



Are you interested in donating your vehicle?

Consider donating it to  
*Breast and GYN Health Project*  
It's hassle-free and your generosity is appreciated.  
*Call Beth, at BGHP, for more information.*



## Eel River Valley & Southern Humboldt Outreach Services

*Outreach volunteers at a recent training*

BGHP's grassroots peer support

continues to take root throughout Humboldt County. In January, social worker and breast cancer survivor,

Marilyn Foote, opened "BGHP Drop-In Hours" at Garberville's Heart of the Redwood's Community Hospice facility on Maple Street. She's there every Wednesday from 1:00-3:00 pm for local people who might like a place to talk or to learn about support services when facing a breast or gynecologic cancer concern. For more information, please contact her at 707-943-9786.

Eel River Valley Outreach Center's devoted volunteers welcome people to drop-in every Tuesday from 3:00-6:00 p.m. The support group meets the first Tuesday of each month from 6:00-7:30 p.m. at 1719 Main Street, Fortuna (office of Visiting Angels). Robin Rocha, Outreach Liaison joined the team, thanks to grant support from McLean Foundation. Donations from Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, Redwood Capital Bank, and Visiting Angels are supporting this site. Appointments outside of these hours can be scheduled, so please call the Arcata office at 707-825-8345 or 726-7919 to request an appointment.



## Hops in Humboldt Grant 2016



In February, Hops in Humboldt awarded the Breast and GYN Health Project a grant to purchase 10 digital recorders for patients to use at their medical visits. This is a service that BGHP has offered for years, but we needed more to meet the need. Patients sometimes want to record their doctor's visits to help them and their loved ones review information from the visit. Now, these digital recorders will be available for short-term loan at our sites in Arcata, Fortuna and Garberville. For more information about the digital recorders for patient use, please call (707) 825-8345.

## Your Legacy Gift will Provide Hope for the Future



BGHP has a fund at Humboldt Area Foundation, which makes it easy to leave a legacy gift. Your investment in healing, compassionate support and hope will make a difference for cancer patients in the future. If you have already included BGHP in your estate plans, insurance policies, retirement plans or other planned giving, thank you!

To learn more, contact Rose Gale-Zoellick at 707-825-8345 or Chris Witt at HAF, 707-442-2993 ext. 302

## BGHP and Dr. Julie Ohnemus Honored

by Rose Gale-Zoellick



On Saturday, March 5th, the local chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) honored the Breast and GYN Health Project at its annual Women's History Tea.

At the event, AAUW member and BGHP supporter, Shelley Mitchell, introduced BGHP and Dr. Julie Ohnemus, saying "This is a local organization I've been wanting to see get this recognition for many years!" Dr. Julie Ohnemus, BGHP Founder, and now a 20 year breast cancer survivor, told the room filled with about 60 women about her breast cancer journey and the founding of the Breast and GYN Health Project (then Humboldt Community Breast Health Project). Many in the room had never heard the story and many were moved to tears.

Judy Stoffer, a community volunteer and BGHP supporter, was also honored at the Tea. About 18 years ago, Judy helped a group of local women organize one of the first fundraisers for BGHP when they brought inspirational speaker, Bellaruth Naperstack to Humboldt County to speak about healing.



Our thanks to the American Association of University Women for this honor and to Dr. Ohnemus for speaking.

### **Resources for Mammograms, Pap Tests & Other Women's Health Exams**

Women without insurance or with high patient costs and who may meet income guidelines can call BGHP to learn more about the following programs:

**CDP- Every Woman Counts:** All local hospitals and many doctors' offices/clinics participate.

**Family PACT:** Many doctors' offices/clinics participate.

**Mad River Hospital's Free Mammography** grant from the National Breast Cancer Foundation.



BGHP is a registered charity for Amazon Smile. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to BGHP.

Just search for "Breast and GYN Health Project" when prompted. It's easy! Visit: [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)

## Why Do You Volunteer for BGHP?

By Warmliners, Board Members & CAB Members

"Having had cancer myself, I feel I can help others get through it. It is a part of my healing, not forgetting what happened to me, but incorporating it into my life. When you have cancer it's good to be able to talk to others who have been there too."

"I have received so much help and support from the Breast and GYN Health Project that I want to do whatever I can to help them."

"Giving back is the perfect way to "Pay It Forward". It is a tangible expression of gratitude for your own recovery."

"BGHP is close to my heart as a breast cancer survivor. I volunteer because of all the very special women I've met here who inspire me with their grace, good humor, courage and acceptance. With the scarcity of health providers in this area and these having huge case loads, it's critical that BGHP be here to help provide the information, education, and kind and loving support that local women need to make informed decisions about their own bodies."

"The rewards for one's efforts are very tangible here- you can hear it in the voices of women on the phone and each person who comes through the door. Even selling raffle tickets elicits appreciation from each contact."

"When I was diagnosed with breast cancer the Project women gave me hope and a vision of how my future could be. My wish is to give that hope to other women starting this journey."

## 35th Annual Atalanta's Victory Run & Walk An all women event!



This year the run/walk will take place on Mother's Day, Sunday May 8 at 10 a.m. There will be a 2-mile run & walk or an 8K run & walk.

Proceeds from the event will be shared with Breast and GYN Health Project and local running teams. Sign up now! Online registration at - [www.6rrc.com](http://www.6rrc.com)

## Thanks to our Volunteers and Supporters



St. Joseph Health Fair



QuarterCraze



Baywood Women's Golf Association Tournament



Willow Creek Breast Cancer Awareness Golf Tournament



Volunteers created & donated ChemoKits



15th Annual Fall Concert



Buddy's Towing new truck arrives with BGHP staff & volunteers



Just a few of the high energy teachers from the Zumbathons



Sign up for our  
Monthly Project eNews

- Calendar of Activities
  - Volunteer/Survivor Spotlight
  - Lots of ways you can lend a hand
  - Paperless and no cost to subscribers
- Email [volunteer@hcbhp.org](mailto:volunteer@hcbhp.org) and we will add you to our Project e-News mailing list.



### Other Ways to Support our Services

- Help sell vacation raffle tickets, please
- Buy a library book, see wishlist in eNews
- Hold a fundraising event
- Contribute your volunteer skills

## We are Forever Grateful to Our Contributors

*Thank you to over 919 individuals and businesses who generously donated since August. Space allows a partial listing of foundation, business and event supporters.*

- Allstate Insurance-Tim Storey-for "Silver Lining" books for clients
- Andree Wagner Peace Trust
- Arcata Artisan's Cooperative for Arts! Arcata partnership
- Arcata High School's Volleyball, Football & Cheerleaders
- Baroni Design for the special "Cancer Awareness" Jewelry Line
- Baywood Women's Golf Association & Golf Tournament Supporters
- Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria
- BiCoastal Media radio stations
- Bidding for Good On-Line Auction donors, sponsors & bidders
- Big Foot Golf & Country Club & Golf Tournament participants
- Heidi Bourne for the Mindfulness Meditation Classes
- Buddy's Auto Center's Pink Tow Truck in Arcata and Willow Creek
- Burnt Ranch School for Breast Cancer Awareness Month support
- Cindy Hardin & Fortuna Quarter Craze fans for a successful event
- Cypress Grove Chevre
- Dae's Jewelry Sales & donations of earrings to clients
- Eureka High School EAST Lab Program
- Fall Concert sponsors and volunteers
- Fortuna High School Football and Cheerleaders
- HSU Women's Basketball, Volleyball & Football
- Hops in Humboldt
- Humboldt Association of Realtors
- Humboldt Dutch Brothers Coffee
- Humboldt Herbals
- Humboldt Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
- Kalos Salon for support with wigs for clients
- KHSU
- KHUM & Lost Coast Communications
- KIEM TV - News Channel 3
- Richard & Emily Levin Foundation
- Linden & Co - special day donated by all their professionals
- Lost Coast Art Glass
- Mad River Brewery
- Mad River Radio Group for Year 4 of "Punt, Pass & Pink"
- Marla Joy & all the Zumbathon sponsors & instructors
- McKinleyville High School Volleyball, Football & Cheerleaders
- McLean Foundation
- Mercer-Fraser Co.
- MiaBo Foundation
- Miller Farms Nursery
- Myrtle Avenue Pet Center
- National Breast Cancer Foundation
- Norcal Mutual Insurance Co & Humboldt Del Norte Medical Society
- Patricia D. and William B. Smullin Foundation
- Ray's Food Place & customers for "Register Round-Up" donations
- Redwood Capital Bank for Fortuna Site support
- Redwood River Resort
- Sales for Survivors - all 65 business participants
- See's Community Fund
- Soroptimists International of Eureka and Humboldt Bay
- South Fork High School Football and Cheerleaders
- St. Bernard's High School Football and Cheerleaders
- Times Standard for the large media support in October
- Vacation Raffle destination donors, sponsors and volunteers
- Visiting Angels for donating use of their Fortuna Office Space

*Thank you!*

To receive a copy of our 2015 Annual Report with a complete listing of contributors, please contact us at (707) 825-8345, or view the program and fiscal reports at [www.hcbhp.org](http://www.hcbhp.org)



987 8th Street  
(Corner of 8th & J)  
Arcata, CA 95521

(707) 825-8345  
(707) 825-8384 FAX

Office Hours

Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
After hours by appointment  
Administration, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Fortuna Tuesdays 3 - 6 pm

Garberville Wednesdays 1 - 3 p.m.

Email: [info@hcbhp.org](mailto:info@hcbhp.org)  
Website: [www.bghp.org](http://www.bghp.org)

NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 347  
ARCATA, CA 95521

OR CURRENT RESIDENT



**Support Groups**

Meetings held at the Project Office, 987 8th St., Arcata, unless otherwise noted. Meeting times may change. Call 825-8345 to confirm or to add your name to the reminder call list.

**Arcata Breast Cancer Support Group**

2nd & 4th Thursdays of the Month, 4:30-6:00 p.m

**Gynecologic Cancer Support Group**

2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the Month, 3:00-4:30 p.m.

**Young Women's Support Group**

Call for information.

**Lymphoma Group**

1st Tuesday, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

**Advanced Disease Group**

For those living with Stage IV Disease.  
Every Monday, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

**Amazon Writers**

Explore creative writing as a path to healing.  
(Call to be put on waiting list for next series.)

**Fortuna Breast Cancer Support Group**

Visiting Angels Office, 1719 Main Street (near Shotz Coffee)  
1st Tuesday of the Month, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

***Special Thanks to these Sponsors for Underwriting this Newsletter***

