

Breast Cancer Awareness Is More Than a Pink Ribbon

by Joy Galloni

In 2000, the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation (VBCF) began giving public libraries donations to purchase updated breast cancer information. VBCF "is a grassroots organization committed to the eradication of breast cancer through education and advocacy."¹ Five women met at a breast cancer support group in 1991 and wanted to do more.² Their ages ranged from early thirties to mid-fifties. When I joined the organization seven years later, two of these women had died from breast cancer. "VBCF is the only grassroots organization in Virginia devoted solely to representing the needs of women and family members affected by breast cancer. [...] [I]ndividuals diagnosed with breast cancer, family members, friends, healthcare professionals, and others"³ make up the four thousand-plus current members.⁴ The goals of VBCF "are to establish the eradication of breast cancer as a state and national priority, to advocate for the collective needs of people affected by breast cancer, and to educate all Virginians on the truth about breast cancer. Educate. Advocate. Eradicate."⁵

Donating funds to public libraries is one of the ways to educate all Virginians.

I joined this organization after being diagnosed with breast cancer in 1998. As soon as the phone call from my doctor was complete, I began researching every word he had told me. As I moved through the frightening adventure of breast



Etta Boyd (left), a member of the VBCF Board of Directors and vice president of its Central Virginia Chapter, and Joy Galloni (right) promote breast cancer awareness and education through library resources.

cancer, reading and learning gave me a sense of calm. Having been a devoted library patron since childhood, and having moved into the career of college librarian at Richard Bland College before diagnosis, I knew libraries need current materials.

A chapter of the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation was formed in the Chester Tri-Cities area. I served as the first president. All of the chapter members wanted to assist others in learning about breast cancer. Some of our events were pri-

marily for fundraising. When we had money, we wanted to return it to our respective communities.

Joy Galloni has worn the shoes of catalog, acquisitions, technical services, inter-library loan, and public services librarian. Currently librarian at the Richard Bland College of the College of William and Mary, she has also served as director at the Jamestown Public Library, North Carolina, and is currently a breast cancer advocate and an active volunteer for the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation.

What better investment than public libraries!

As our Book Project began, the chapter members read books and reviews and created a list of books and magazines that had provided help for us. Next, members contacted Appomattox Regional Library System, Chesterfield County Library System, Petersburg Public Library, and the Colonial Heights Public Library with our idea. The VBCF Book Project was very well received.

A suggested list of book titles with ISBNs was delivered to each library with gift plates and a check. We knew each library could choose what was needed for its collection and receive better pricing from vendors. Donations were given according to the size of each library system.

The project grew as the Richmond and Chester Tri-Cities Chapters merged. The Book Project titles expanded into poetry, Spanish language materials, books for children and husbands of breast cancer patients, and alternative medicine. Henrico and Powhatan County Library Systems, Pamunkey Regional Library System, and Richmond City received donations, and last year we also added the Hawthorne Group Resource Center and the Massey Cancer Center Patient Resource Libraries Linen-Powell Library to our recipient list.

In 2007 the VBCF state board adopted the Book Project and began to present donations, suggested materials lists, and our pink and burgundy gift plates to libraries across the commonwealth. Recently, DVDs were added to the suggested materials. Proudly I say that we now donate to libraries in



The VBCF Book Project display at Appomattox Regional Library.

many areas: Meherrin Regional Library System, Portsmouth Public Library, Central Rappahannock Regional Library, Eastern Shore Public Library System, Virginia Beach Public Library System, and the Lonesome Pine Regional Library System.

Has VBCF eradicated breast cancer? No. But as a group, VBCF

members are diligently making life better until this deadly disease is eradicated. VBCF works in partnership with the National Breast Cancer Coalition to advocate for breast cancer research funding on the national level and funding for medical coverage problems. We lobby the General Assembly regularly to keep medical coverage problems at a minimum and to keep state funding for the Every Woman's Life Project.

Has VBCF met our goals of education? As volunteers speak to groups in many areas, we often hear, "I saw a VBCF bookplate in a book I checked out from my local library." The VBCF members know that breast cancer is more than a pink ribbon, and our donations

to public libraries across the Commonwealth are an example of our deep commitment and caring.

Learn more about the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation and join our efforts to Educate. Advocate. Eradicate. Visit www.vbcf.org.

Notes

1. Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, "Welcome!" *VBCF: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation*, <http://www.vbcf.org> (accessed May 1, 2009).

2. Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation, "About VBCF," *VBCF: Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation*, <http://www.vbcf.org> (accessed May 1, 2009).

3. VBCF, "Welcome!"

4. VBCF, "About VBCF."

5. VBCF, "Welcome!" **VL**