Our last issue carried a number of articles by women who were long-term survivors of breast cancer.

In response, we received many letters thanking us and applauding those women for sharing their journeys.

Clearly, many improvements have happened since those early days – treatments are kinder, more information and support is available, women can be active participants in their health care and, importantly, the concept of breast cancer is not the unspeakable terror it was years ago.

As Barbara Dowling from Dorigo, NSW, has written: “All of the letters printed were inspiring to me, so they should also be for the many women grappling for some degree of normality amid the uncertainties of the disease. It is shocking that so many of those women stated how young they were at the time of ‘it’ happening and, of course, how traumatic the treatment was way back then”.

As a result, we have received many new stories from survivors – far too many to include here. We have decided, instead, to make them available to readers across Australia and the world by including them on our website at www.bcn.org.au.

These are great tales of courage, persistence and of overcoming multiple challenges, and we strongly recommend a visit to the site.

More so than ever, our website is becoming an important and popular tool. During the month of October, we had a staggering 73,250 hits on our site – an average daily total of 2362 visits.

Our latest authors include: Jill Orchard (Hobart, on behalf of her mother, Edna Smith); Lorraine Petzke (Bendigo); Ethel Hughes (North Rockhampton); Virginia Linton-Smith (Melbourne); Janelle Pritchard (Capalaba, Queensland, telling us about Anna – a 45-year survivor); Noel Sumner (Armadale, Vic.); Bev Artiss (Goulburn, NSW); Helene Harry (Lorne, Vic.); Joan Marsh (Armidale, NSW); Gwen Ashall (Emerald Beach, N SW); and Robyn Wegner (Hillbank, SA).

– Lyn Swinburne
Chief Executive Officer

This year, the Field of Women visited Hobart in Tasmania. Amid the silhouettes are members of the Organising Committee, Karen Forster, Pauline Watson and Joan Williams. To see more of the Hobart event, turn to pages 8 and 9.
State Reports

Northern Territory

Our annual luncheon at Government House was well attended and we were touched by the speech given by Jeanette Anictomatis, the wife of the outgoing Administrator. She has been an excellent friend and supporter of our cause.

Our Gala Banquet on October 24 was attended by Senator Trish Crossin and Delia Lawrie MLA, as well as our sponsors. The evening was a success and even rated a mention in Hansard!

The evening was a joint fundraiser for the ANZ Clinical Trials Group and Dragons A breast NT and looks set to become a regular event on the NT calendar.

October 26 saw a Darwin-style Mini-Field on the edge of the Arafura Sea. It culminated in a remembrance flower ceremony at dusk.

Our Indigenous Breast Cancer awareness poster was launched on October 27 at the Desert Park in Alice Springs. It attracted Alice’s mayor, Senator Trish Crossin, A TSIC Commissioner Alison Anderson, and the Deputy Administrator of the NT, Pat Miller.

Susan Tulley spoke on behalf of NT Breast Cancer Voice.

Contact: Susan Tulley, (08) 8927 3327 or tullynt@msn.com.au, or Michelle Hanton, (08) 8941 8923 or hanton@ozemail.com.au

New South Wales

NSW women have again been active. On the metropolitan scene, fellow State Representative, Megan James, has been the busiest, producing a son, Griffin!

There has been a huge amount of activity across NSW. Highlights include:

- the launch of an electronic NSW Directory of Breast Cancer and Services (see page 5);
- the launch of the Royal North Shore Hospital’s (RNSH) Cancer Resources Centre for patients and their families;
- the National Breast Cancer Centre Breakfast at the Westin Hotel;
- a BCAG (NSW) breakfast at Old Government House, Parramatta;
- the Illawarra Support Group’s Celebration of Life luncheon for Australia’s Breast Cancer Day;
- a presentation by oncologist Dr Fran Boyle and Pam Bell to medical students from the RNSH’s Medical Clinical School;
- a Mini-Field in a midvale, thanks to the work of Vivenne Gregg and her team, which worked closely with Bakers Delight, and still found time to paddle as Dragons A breast;
- Mini-Fields in Cooma, M erimbula and Goulburn which helped raise BCNA’s profile in southern NSW;
- the work of Southern A rea Health Service’s Breast Cancer A dvisory Group, which is made up of health professionals and consumers and, to improve rural breast cancer services;
- other Mini-Fields in A lbury/Wodonga, Bega, Clarence Valley, Cootamundra, Forbes, Tweed/Brumswick and Wagga Wagga; and
- the establishing of two new EN CORE programs in Cooma and Goulburn.

Contact: Pam Bell, (02) 9955 9313 or bellpc@bigpond.net.au, or Megan James 0418 454 953.

Victoria

Victorians have been involved in a number of activities aimed at increasing public awareness and education of breast cancer issues, and raising the profile of BCNA.

While the statistics tell us that most survive and that survival rates are improving, there are a significant number who know their lives will be cut short by breast cancer. Many of these women were present at Breast Cancer Victoria’s forum for advanced breast cancer in Melbourne at the end of October.

Two BCNA members spoke of their experiences and identified issues pertinent to those with advanced breast cancer. They were powerful talks with a distinct lack of ‘victim mentality’ and we are grateful for their contribution to the success of the day, which was dedicated to the memory of much-loved BCNA member, Mary Bartlett.

Several Mini-Fields were held around the State – Belgrave, Berwick, Brighton, Cadlemaine, Geelong, Hamilton, Heidelberg, MLC (Kew), Melbourne City, M unro, San Remo, Swinburne University (Hawthorn), Tusselaar’s Tulip Festival (the Dandenongs), Traralgon and Warrnambool. We were thrilled to hear positive comments from the conveners and those who attended the events. Congratulations to all involved.

With the warmer weather approaching, many of us feel the need to get out and get fit. Remember that there is a dragon boat team that will begin training in early December. Join us – it’s great fun!

For information about dragon boating in Victoria, visit www.dragonsabreast.com.au or contact Pru M enzes on phone (03) 9570 4896 or prum@cclvc.vic.gov.au

A II the best to everyone for a wonderful summer!

Contact: Gerda Evans, (03) 9805 2500 or gerda@bigpond.net.au

Western Australia

A ction on Breast Cancer WA (A OBC) held a successful Mini-Field at the Perth Cultural Centre and the WA State Library displayed BNCA information and support leaflets.

Oncology ward nurses from St. John of God Healthcare Subiaco wore BCNA caps and sold merchandise during October.

As always, Bakers Delight’s outlets and support staff were fabulous in their enthusiasm and support, generating interest and awareness of BCNA.

A OBC continues to communicate with major hospitals about the concerns of radiotherapy delays and one of our members, Margaret, continues to make inroads on the issue of the lack of CMI leaflets in prescription medication.

WA members active as speakers included Jennifer Pettigrove, Ann...
The ACT

We planned several major events around Breast Cancer Week and the 9th Australian Masters Games in Canberra, with fantastic teamwork from Dragon's A breast and support from Bosom Buddies. Highlights included:

- The Dragons A breast Regatta for the Pink Lady Shield donated by ACT politician, Brendan Smyth.
- A fundraising ride by the Canberra International Women's Motorcycle Association which raised $1000.
- A Mini-Field at the National Library of Australia.
- A morning tea for BCNA at the Crowne Plaza on Australia's Breast Cancer Day, which was organised by the venue's marketing manager, Cheryl Parsons. This resulted in two companies, TransACT and ACTEW-AGL, each donating $500.
- The Bosom Buddies cocktail party, including Look at Me Now, a photo exhibition by Brigitte Seiger.
- The first showing of the Warrior Women exhibition outside Victoria.
- An afternoon tea at Parliament House hosted by Senators Marise Payne and Trish Crossin, on behalf of the Parliamentary Breast Cancer Support Group.
- The National Library of Australia attracted 250 people. Speakers included Prof. Christine Ewan, the CEO of the National Breast Cancer Centre; Lyn Swinburne from BCNA; Val Lee from Bosom Buddies; Melva Walter, a breast care nurse; Prof. Don McKenzie from the University of British Columbia; and Dr. David Hardman, a vascular surgeon.

These activities allowed networking with the Parliamentary Breast Cancer Support Group, the National Capital Authority, the Office of the Status of Women, Health pac, local health-related agencies and support groups.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to and/or attended these events.

Contact: Elspeth Humphries, humphries4@ozemail.com.au or A nna Wellings Booth, (02) 6247 8470 or wbfamily@homemail.com.au.

Queensland

Congratulations and thanks to everyone who organised Mini-Fields across Queensland. They were held in 15 places, including Brisbane at Bulimba, Cleveland and the Wesley Hospital at Toowong, and also in Ayr, Caboolture, Caloundra, Longreach, Toowoomba, Laidley, Esk, Boonah, Proserpine, Moranbah and N. oosa.

Kathy Kuipers spoke about practical support at the Queensland Cancer Fund's Young Women's Network on October 29. The Wesley More Choices Gala Fashion Parade on October 30 was a wonderful success and included a tribute in memory of Leona Furstenburg.

Deb Hill, Queensland Central Zone's project officer for Strengthening Support has held several focus groups for women with advanced breast cancer. The results of these and the surveys will be included in her report, due in mid-December.

A part of the project's Northern and Southern Zones, breast care nurses have been appointed to public hospitals in Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Gold Coast and Toowoomba, and at Princess Alexandra Hospital.

People in these areas need to lobby Queensland Health and their particular district to ensure these positions are made permanent. Contact us for more information.

Our Queensland Committee to support BCNA and follow up on State-based issues, is up and running. Everyone is welcome to attend our meetings, which are held on a Saturday morning about every six weeks at Gail Wiltshire's Twelfth Night Theatre, Bowen Hills from 10.30am to 12.30pm.

A big thanks to Dr Jane Turner, who delivered an excellent talk at our last meeting about psychosocial guidelines for the care of people with cancer.

We would like to see more of our member groups represented, including those from outside Brisbane. You are also welcome to join by e-mail or mail by contacting either of us.

May the peace and joy of Christmas be with you all.

Contact: Veronica M. aculay-Cross, (07) 3269 8083 or vonphil@bigpond.net.au, or Lyn Moore, (07) 3822 5468 or lynmoore@bigpond.com

Tasmania

The past three months have been consumed with preparations for the main Field of Women. Local members were kept busy giving presentations to support groups, service clubs, hospital workers and schools about BCNA and the Field of Women. Especially busy were Joan Williams, Gerry Rockliff, Pauline Watson, Karen Forster and Rosemary Kerrison.

October 26, the day of the Field of Women, dawned bright and sunny, and a record number of Tasmanians, for this type of event, turned out.

A huge vote of thanks to the small band of Tasmanian women who believed that we, the smallest State, could stage this event. If the Tasmanian public had not heard of the Field of Women or pink ladies beforehand, they have now! The next State meeting will be at Campbell Town Fire Station on December 6 at 10am. Car pooling is available. Come along and see the photos from the Field of Women!

Contact: Karen Forster, (03) 6273 4422 or dforster@vtown.com.au, or Joan Williams, (03) 6424 5886 or gwilliams44@vtown.com.au

South Australia

In Adelaide some 100 people attended the Mini-Field at Henley Beach Square. The guest speakers included breast surgeon, James Kollias, along with Sandi Tillbrook, Deb Martin and Sally Russell.

The State Reports continue on page 16
BCNA would like to thank ...

- Linda Elliott and Bev Burley for raising $5500 with the Kids Space event in Melbourne.
- Lee Naylor for organising the Fit and Healthy Breakfasts in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.
- Narelle (N oddy) G roundstrom and B'r'est Friends Bundaberg for organising the Bums on Bikes fundraiser which raised $2862.
- Tesselar Tulip Farm for donating $2000 from its Ladies Day at the tulip festival in Melbourne's Dandenongs.
- Delegates attending the Financial Services Partners Challenge Seminar in Christchurch, New Zealand, who collected almost $20,000 in donations after Raelene Boyle addressed the group.
- Pacific Brands for distributing 50 merchandise boxes and 2000 badges.
- PBS Services for distributing 18 merchandise boxes.
- Mercedes Waratah Press for printing The Beacon.
- KW Doggett for assisting with the cost of the paper for The Beacon.
- Marsh Insurance Brokers for its donation of $1000.
- On-going support from Le Reve, Norwich and AIA Insurance.
- Prue Troedel, Harriet Moore, Chris Collingwood, Penny Sennitt and Susie Vaughan for organising another successful Pink Ladies garden tour this year around Victoria's Mornington Peninsula and raising almost $4000.

Sincere thanks to all our BCNA state reps, regional reps, consumer reps and volunteers who have helped us throughout the year. We rely on your support and appreciate your willingness to get involved.

Bakers Delight in the pink

You will have noticed I’m sure, when visiting your local Bakers Delight bakery in October, that ‘pink’ is definitely a colour that could be adopted all year round – it looked fabulous!

Every bakery (650+) around Australia was decked out with pink promotional material, including posters, flyers, balloons, silhouettes, aprons and even pink 100s and 1000s to coincide with Bakers Delight’s block loaf promotion.

Fifty cents from every $2.60 loaf sold on October 25 was generously donated to Breast Cancer Network Australia.

This was supported by a donation tin on every counter, which proved to be very successful – many bakeries filling their tins in the first week.

Head, leg, arm and eyebrow shaving, sausage sizzles, pink hairdos and BCNA merchandise selling were just a few of the extra efforts put in by our special friends at Bakers Delight.

What will they think up next year?

We would like to thank Bakers Delight, the franchisees, the staff, their customers and all the BCNA members who supported this promotion.

You have raised $120,000 to help us in our work – a terrific effort!

Seen at the National Breast Cancer Foundation’s annual research update in Sydney were two BCNA mother/daughter teams.

Front: Judith and Maryanne Maher.
Back: Amanda Maltabarrow and Margaret Williams.
We are extremely excited to announce that Susan Love and Stella Kyriakides will be our two international speakers at the 2nd National Breast Cancer Conference for Women, to be held in Melbourne on August 27 to 29.

Dr Susan Love will need no introduction to most of our readers. She is the author of Dr Susan Love’s Breast Book, considered by many people as ‘the bible’ of breast disease.

Despite numerous offers in the past, Susan has never visited Australia, but she is looking forward to speaking at our conference. I have had the privilege of hearing Susan speak on a number of occasions, and she is an enthralling, informative and captivating speaker.

Stella Kyriakides lives in Cyprus and is the Vice-President of Europa Donna, the breast cancer advocacy coalition representing women with breast cancer across 29 countries in Europe. Europa Donna is BCNA’s sister group in that part of the world.

We have spoken to many women already planning their trips to Melbourne for August. There is plenty of time for you to organise to travel together and to share accommodation. Some women are planning fundraising events in their communities to help cover the costs of getting to the conference. Registration has been set at $100, to help cover the cost of lunches and morning and afternoon teas over the three days.

An exciting and informative program is being planned with the social highlight to be a huge celebration party one evening – no stuffy conference dinner for us!

— Lyn Swinburne
In a landmark decision, a Federal Magistrate has found that QBE Insurance unlawfully discriminated against Denice Bassanelli, a BCNA member from South Australia, and has awarded her damages and costs. QBE refused to grant Denice travel insurance for travel-related events such as lost luggage and medical expenses not associated with her metastatic breast cancer. She had not sought cover for medical expenses associated with her pre-existing condition.

Win for Denice

She is keen to thank all the people who have supported her and her family through the process to date.

QBE has appealed the decision, with the appeal to be heard in January 2004. We will keep readers of The Beacon posted on progress in Denice’s case.

Singing the song of life

It might have surprised Monteverdi to know that the music of one of his great operas, L’Incoronazione di Poppea, would be learnt some day in a Sydney hospital bed by a one-breasted woman shortly after surgery.

I was told I had breast cancer on my birthday and that a mastectomy of the left breast was essential.

The consulting surgeon assured me that he would not remove any chest muscle. This was vitally important information. I am a singer and flautist. Baroque music is my passion. I believe I was put on this planet to sing (the endorphin release you get from singing is unsurpassable in my experience).

Four days after the removal of the left breast, the all-important lymph nodes test results came back.

My relief that they were all clear far outweighed the surgeon’s news that the right breast would also have to be removed.

Harmony is important to a baroque musician, so I was pleased to discover that my bust-line would not be out of balance!

Anyway, I had music to learn for our next concert and was not going to use the time in hospital unprofitably.

I was released from hospital on a Friday, 3½ weeks after my diagnosis – flat-chested, and anticipating months of chemotherapy – but with my brain and spirit surging to perform the Monteverdi.

I was back at school teaching music on the next Monday.

Not only flat-chested, but also bald, I sang and played in the next Cantate e Strumenti baroque concert four months after leaving hospital.

The baroque music ensemble, Cantate e Strumenti, was formed in 1994 by my colleague, Tony Eyers, and myself, to fulfil a passionate need to perform the baroque repertoire that we both love.

At present the ensemble includes soprano voice, baroque flute, recorder, two violins, cello and harpsichord.

Having breast cancer has made me a more confident, assertive person.

There is so much music still to perform and no time to waste on negative energy.

Music, my spirit nurturer, helped me through my medical ordeal and keeps my positive energy soaring.

Amanda Louise Muir, Sydney, NSW

My Journey

Denice Bassanelli celebrates her win with her husband, Mike, and children, William and Edward (Photograph courtesy of The Advertiser, Adelaide).
Our 56 Mini-Fields of Women proved to be an outstanding success! The idea of organising a Mini-Field can be daunting, but our convenors (see the list on page 10) chose to accept the challenge. They all excelled themselves and must be congratulated for their passion, dedication and creativity. We have been delighted with the outcome. One convenor was so excited she didn’t sleep for days!

An added bonus for the convenors was the offer of assistance from Telstra Friends. Many of the Mini-Fields made use of this generous offer of assistance.

We also encouraged our convenors to ask their local libraries to promote our library list of ‘must have’ books. Their persuasive powers resulted in many library displays and the promise that these books would be ordered in as soon as possible.

The ladies in Caloundra were so skilled at obtaining silhouette sponsorships that they had more sponsorships than the 100 silhouettes allocated to their Mini-Field!

The enthusiasm has been so great this year that many convenors have already signed up for next year. If your group would like to hold a Mini-Field in 2004, phone BCNA on 1800 500 258 to register your interest.

Space restrictions will not allow us to include more coverage of the Mini-Fields, so we recommend readers of The Beacon visit the BCNA website at www.bcna.org.au for a tour of our Mini-Fields around the country. You will be astounded and proud of what so many of our member groups and women have achieved.

Congratulations to all our Mini-Field convenors and their organising committees!

More Mini-Field images on page 10.
On October 26 the sun shone down on the Hobart Cenotaph and bathed the silhouettes in a golden glow.

We were truly blessed to have such fine weather as the week leading up to the Field of Women was grey and gloomy.

It was as though the weather sensed the importance of the occasion.

Following the morning’s breast cancer forum, people gathered in Franklin Square, a popular Hobart meeting place, to commence the Silent Walk along Macquarie Street to the Cenotaph. Franklin Square was awash with pink.

Raelene Boyle, Jocelyn Newman, Dr Patricia Edgar and other prominent women lead the walk to the Field of Women.

Many people from all around Australia also made the pilgrimage to Tasmania to show their support for those affected by breast cancer.

Nothing can prepare you for the tingling feeling that starts at your toes and moves all the way through your body to your finger tips when you see the Field of Women for the first time. She was like a sleeping giant waiting patiently for the Silent Walk participants to arrive.

The desire to participate was so strong for the ladies northern of Tasmania that they arranged for a bus to pick them up at 5.30am! Then there was Jean, who travelled solo from the Sunshine Coast, pulling a caravan behind her.

At the launch Will Hodgman, MHA, was the Master of Ceremonies and he talked about how he had lost his mother to breast cancer. Lyn Swinburne spoke about the significance of the Field and Tania Monty, a young breast cancer survivor, inspired the crowd with her own story.

After the launch, people spent some quiet time wandering among the silhouettes, reading the messages and planting new ones.

It was a chance to reflect on those we have lost, as well as to celebrate the lives of those who have survived breast cancer.

– Michelle Rule
2003 Project Manager
An event as complex as the Field of Women would not be possible without the support of many people and organisations. We especially thank:

- **Our major sponsors**
  Bakers Delight;
  Australia Post; and
  New Idea.
- **Local sponsors and supporters.**
- **Karen Forster**, who was a superb project officer, and her family.
- **Hobart’s Organising Committee** - Rosemary Kerrison (Chair), Will Hodgman MHA, Chris Van Buuren, Margaret O’Rourke, Joan Williams, Shirley Catchpole, Pauline Watson, Cris Fitzpatrick and Tracy McGlone.
- All the volunteers, who completed a variety of tasks, including planting silhouettes, data entry, selling merchandise, marshalling, assisting at the forum and surveying the field.
- Naughton Transport Services for transporting the silhouettes from Melbourne again this year.
- Precision Forme Cutting for helping produce extra silhouettes.
- Multiwall for storing our Mini-Field of Women kits throughout the year.

Thank-you for helping make the Field of Women a reality
Congratulations to our 2003 Mini-Field convenors

**ACT**
Canberra – Claire Dennis

**NORTHERN TERRITORY**
Darwin – Michelle Hanton

**NEW SOUTH WALES (NSW)**
Albury/Wodonga – Judy Harrison
Armidale – Vivienne Gegg
Cooma – Jane Redmond
Cootamundra – Sharon Collingridge
Forbes – Christene Gorton
Goulburn – Pat Redman
Merimbula – JoAnne Reid
Tweed/Brunswick – Lyn Laws
Wagga Wagga – Janice Jones

**QUEENSLAND**
Ayr – Shirley Gilmore
Bulimba – Lyn Moore
Caboolture – Jurina Demaine
Cairns – Judy Irvine
Cleveland – Wendy King
Esk, Boonah, Laidley – Lyn Field
Longreach – Heather Morton
Moranbah – Anne Henry
Noosa – Dawn Reed

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA**
Berri – Millie Laccos
Ceduna – Christine Anderson
Henley Beach – Sally Russell
Mt Gambier – Janet Williams
Port Lincoln – Maxine Barker

**TASMANIA**
Devonport – Robyn Glen
Launceston – Pauline Watson
Wynyard – Ann Cameron

**VICTORIA**
Belgrave – Robyn Handisides
Berwick – Kathleen Irvine
Brighton – Pamela Williams
Castlemaine – Cheryl Ball
Geelong – Helen Spicer
Munro – Glenys Ruff
Ringwood – Mandy Cavanagh
San Remo – Annie Bailey
Traralgon – Enid Philip
Victorian State Library – Gerda Evans
Warrnambool – Marilyn Spikin

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**
Geraldton – Kaye Street
Perth – Maria Waters

Visit BCNA’s website at www.bcna.org.au for more images from the 2003 Mini-Fields
Letters to the Editor

Thanks for the latest magazine and The Beacon. The stories of people who are many years down the path of life and doing well makes great copy. One small request? BreaCan gets lots of mentions in The Beacon, but nowhere in recent issues is there any information as to where BreaCan is located. That would be a useful addition in future issues, whenever it is mentioned, especially for new readers.

– Linda King, Victoria

Editor: Thanks for pointing this out. BreaCan is a drop-in resource centre for people with breast cancer, their family and friends. Its address and contact details are: First Floor, 123 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000. Phone (03) 9664 9333, fax (03) 9663 7955, e-mail breacan@whv.org.au or web www.whv.org.au/breacan.htm

Just recently I had a problem with my right breast and had to have a mammogram and ultrasound on that breast, for which I was charged $194. Even though I am in a private fund it was not covered by it, only by Medicare. My question is, ‘If you are having those tests done on only one breast shouldn’t you be paying less?’

This topic has often been discussed at our group support meetings, but I don’t think the solution was ever found.

It would be interesting to get comments from experts on this.

– Yasna Hale, Mangerton, NSW

I saw an article about Mary Macheras-Magias and her interest in setting up a website.

I was diagnosed with early breast cancer at the age of 32 years. I was pregnant at the time with my second child. It was a distressing time for me, my family and my little boy. I had a mastectomy, but could not have more treatment due to the pregnancy.

Six months after my little girl was born, I was determined to breast feed (I had successfully breast fed my son for eight months).

After some traumatic weeks with a very sore nipple, we managed to create a positive breastfeeding experience.

She was exclusively breast fed for five months when we began solids. I weaned her from the breast at six months so that I could have a breast reconstruction – the temporary implant was nearing its use-by date. My little girl is my miracle baby and certainly helped me through the whole experience. We just celebrated her second birthday, which I also consider my anniversary. So far, all is well with my other breast.

Good luck with your website.

– Rose McCathie, ???

Advice for those with young children

If you have a young baby or toddler while receiving chemotherapy, ask about their immunisations. The Oral Sabin is a live culture and is passed out in the child’s faeces. I was advised to have my baby given the Salk Injection for polio. This is safer for you as the culture is ‘dead’.

– Angela McDonald, Hobart, Tasmania

A few tips for parents with young children

If you have a young baby or toddler while receiving chemotherapy, ask about their immunisations. The Oral Sabin is a live culture and is passed out in the child’s faeces. I was advised to have my baby given the Salk Injection for polio. This is safer for you as the culture is ‘dead’.

– Angela McDonald, Hobart, Tasmania

Meet our new staff members

National Programs Manager – Terri Smith. Terri replaces Gil Paulsen, who is expecting her first child in early January.

National Communications and Marketing Manager – Kerrie Milburn-Clark. Kerrie replaces Sue Watson, who has begun her own corporate training company.
Doctors warn about the accuracy of thermography

Women have been warned not to fall for claims that breast cancers can be detected early by a technique known as thermography.

The WA Health Department has urged women not to waste their money on the scans, which could miss tumours and falsely reassure women that they are not at risk of breast cancer.

BreastScreen WA’s medical director, Dr Liz Wylie, has said that many women were attracted to thermography because it did not use radiation or require compression of the breast.

“But it is such a poor detector of breast cancer and there is a very significant risk that women will be falsely reassured that they don’t have cancer,” she said.

Liz said proponents of thermography claimed it produced ‘heat pictures’ of the breast and used the rationale that skin overlying a malignant breast lesion would be warmer than other areas.

However, studies have shown a tumour has to be several centimetres in diameter before it can be detected by thermography and fewer than 50% of breast cancers detected by mammography screening had an abnormal thermogram.

How to stay young – 10 tips from the Internet

1. Throw out non-essential numbers. That includes age, weight and height. Let the doctors worry about them. That is why you pay them.  
2. Keep only cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down.  
4. Enjoy the simple things.  
5. Laugh often, long and loud. Laugh until you gasp for breath.  
6. Tears happen. Endure, grieve, and move on. The only person who is with us our entire life is ourselves. Be A LIVE while you are alive.  
7. Surround yourself with what you love, whether it’s family, pets, keepsakes, music, plants, hobbies, whatever. Your home is your refuge.  
8. Cherish your health. If it is good, preserve it. If it is unstable, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, get help.  
9. Don’t take guilt trips. Take a trip to the shopping centre, even interstate or to a foreign country but NOT to where the guilt is.  
10. Tell the people you love that you love them at every opportunity.

Dragons Abreast Report

The 9th Australian Masters Games in Canberra will live forever in the memories of Dragons A breast Australia! It was a ‘once in a lifetime’ – a special experience that saw 165 pink paddlers gather in our nation’s capital; a fabulous coming together of members from across this huge country of ours to celebrate the 5th anniversary of Dragons A breast.

Prof. Don McKenzie, the founder of the breast cancer survivor dragon boat movement, was our guest of honour. Don kindly agreed to fly from Vancouver, Canada, to spend the weekend with us.

We managed to pack in a range of exciting events including our annual general meeting, an informal dinner, afternoon tea at Parliament House, the Breast Cancer Forum, the Warrior Women Exhibition and our Celebration of Life 5th anniversary dinner in the magical outdoor setting of the Botanical Gardens. Of course, there were also the actual dragon boat races!

Our special friend and supporter, Madeleine Luck, travelled to Canberra to cheer us on and we received the most wonderful thrill when she generously donated $20,000 to Dragons A breast Austrailia.

The beautiful, inaugural Breast Cancer Network Austraila trophy was hotly contested and won by a composite team made up of paddlers from Queensland, the Northern Territory, Tasmania and Canada. This trophy will do the rounds of the States concerned.

We’ve come a long way in five years and it is all thanks to the wonderful participants that make up our teams!

Special thanks and credit must go to the ACT team for its generous hospitality and tireless work on our behalf.

A full report and photos are available on the website – www.dragonsabreast.com.au

Michelle Hanton, national co-ordinator, Dragons Abreast Australia, phone (08) 8941 8923 or e-mail hanton@ozemail.com.au
Call for hand searchers – Cochrane Breast Cancer Group

The Cochrane Collaboration is an international network formed in response to the need among clinicians and consumers for information that will help them make well-informed decisions about health care.

Many groups around the world are involved in breast cancer research, but the findings are not always readily accessible to the people who need to know the results: the patients and their doctors.

The Cochrane Breast Cancer Group (CBCG), at the University of Sydney, searches for research evidence, formally evaluates it for quality and publishes relevant systematic reviews in the Cochrane Library.

The group thereby aims to provide the best source of accurate and up-to-date information about early detection, treatments in advanced breast cancer, and psychosocial interventions and outcomes.

The CBCG is looking for Sydney-based volunteers to contribute to the hand searching of journals at the University of Sydney.

The object of hand searching is to sift through selected journals not indexed to major biomedical databases for all randomised controlled trials.

Articles relevant to breast cancer are included on the specialised register of breast cancer trials and are available for use in reviews.

Hand searching can be done at a time suitable to the individual.

A short training session and handbook are available, and on-going support is provided.

Contact: Nicole Davis on phone (02) 9562 5081 or nicole.davis@ctc.usyd.edu.au, or Sharon Parker on phone (02) 9562 5006 or sparker@ctc.usyd.edu.au

2003 Glitter Charity Ball a success

The Plaza Ballroom at Melbourne's Regent Theatre was the fairytale venue for the 2003 Glitter Charity Ball.

It was a magical evening full of glamour and excitement. The Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks, and his wife, Terry Bracks, who is a BCNA Board member, were the guests of honour, with Kevin Harrington (Neighbours, SeaChange and The Dish) as MC.

The incredible figure of $68,500 was raised to help fund the development and distribution of the My Journey kit.

A huge thank you must go to Lee Bradford and her Glitter Ball Organising Committee for taking time out of their busy schedules to organise this event.

Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live for ever.
– Mahatma Ghandi

Pink golfers – the talk of the Sunshine Coast!

The Guardian Pharmacies Pink Ladies Golf Classic 2003 organised by Harriet Moore and Prue Troedel attracted 60 women from 14 clubs – and raised $10,800 for BCNA!

The women played on four courses on Queensland's Sunshine Coast in August: Twin Waters, Pelican Waters, Hyatt Regency Coolum and Noosa Springs.

The overall winner was Anna Spiden from the Peninsula Country Golf Club in Victoria.

At the welcome dinner, the women were delighted to have BCNA's Raelene Boyle address the group.

Next year's tournament will be at Sanctuary Cove from August 22 to 27. If you are interested, phone 1800 500 258.
It was early April 1990, when Judy Costello asked her husband, Simon, a paediatrician, to feel the lump she has discovered under her right arm.

Two months later, and two weeks after her mastectomy, Judy made the first entry into a journal that would continue sporadically until her death in March 2002.

*Hey Jude* is a compilation of Judy's journal entries over these years. It also contains contributions from Simon, Jude's three children - Josh, Kris and Evie (five, four and two years of age in 1990) - and Jude's sister, Tracy.

This is not one of those 'feel good' stories with a happy ending. In fact, the book highlights the fact that a family with a member suffering breast cancer, is usually a family facing a myriad of daily challenges and pain.

This is not a *Brady Bunch* story; more a gut-wrenchingly honest snapshot of a family in crisis. Its members wrestle with their own issues and try to make sense of their situation and how they might get through.

We come to feel close to Judy through her writings and wish we could offer her some comfort and a miracle solution to her situation - she is so determined to live!

Like many women faced with advanced disease, she wrestles with finding the best ways to control her situation - meditation, diet, love and peace - against a backdrop of a family in crisis.

The issues that Judy grappled with are not new issues for women with breast cancer - sexuality, body image, intimacy, uncertainty for the future, the need to feel some level of control, a desperation to see her children be happy, the strain on relationships, etc - but somehow the brutal honesty of the writing makes them seem all the more poignant.

For me, who only met Judy a few times in passing, it was painful to read this book. My tears certainly flowed, especially reading the pieces written by the children a year after Judy's death. While I admired Judy's incredible courage and remarkable determination, I felt sad that a life which held so much promise, as clearly shown in the book's colour photographs, was reduced to a daily battle within herself and with those she loved most.

For the first time, I felt great anger and outrage against the disease itself, which in Judy's case seemed to be relentless in its onslaught.

In the wider picture, it raises for us all important issues including:

- How can we best support husbands and partners?
- What services should be available to adolescent children in crisis?
- What systems can we create to help young mothers in practical ways?

*Hey Jude*, in the most powerful of ways, offers readers an intimate view of the daily lives of a family trying to come to terms with advanced breast cancer.

Those who read this amazing book will never forget Judy Costello, which is the reason why Simon, the children and Judy's friends have committed to having the book published.

– Lyn Swinburne

*Hey Jude* is available by phoning 1800 500 258. The cost is $28, plus $5 postage. All proceeds go to BCNA.
List of breast surgeons available on the web

One of the many dilemmas facing women diagnosed with breast cancer is knowing whether the surgeon they have been referred to ‘knows his or her stuff’.

We are delighted to announce that the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) has, for the first time, posted a list of Full Members of the Breast Section of the college on its website.

Until now, no listing of surgeons with a special interest in the breast cancer field was publicly available. BCNA has always felt strongly that women should have access to this sort of information.

The criteria for full membership of the college are based on:
• involvement in the RACS audit;
and
• evidence of continuing medical education in breast disease.

Mind you, merely having their name on the list does not mean that each surgeon comes highly recommended. What it does provide is some evidence that each person has a commitment to the breast cancer field and this should provide some confidence to women in their care.

BCNA congratulates the college for taking this step after so many years. The list can be viewed at www.surgeons.org/wedo/groups/sbs_members.html

Reducing lymphoedema risk

In this issue of The Beacon you’ll find our latest BCNA brochure, Reducing your risk of lymphoedema. As most of you know, lymphoedema (swelling) of the arm can occur any time after breast cancer surgery; or never at all.

Lymphoedema is treatable, but once it develops, it’s a problem that needs life-long management. We hope this brochure will help women to prevent lymphoedema from occurring.

We’d like to thank the RACV Foundation for assistance with printing costs. We intend to make these brochures available in bulk to breast care nurses at the National Breast Care Nurses’ Conference in March 2004.

Please call 1800 500 258 to order additional copies.

Research aims to grow breast implants

Women who have lost a breast to cancer may soon be able to grow a new one, using a stem cell technology being developed by Australian surgeons.

A iso, breast tissue grown inside the body might be used instead of silicone implants to boost breast size.

Surgeons at the Bernard O’Brien Institute of Microsurgery, St Vincent’s Hospital, Melbourne, have produced a pig’s breast by growing fat and muscle tissue in the animal.

Until now, tissues have been grown in a petri dish, but the new technology ensures that the organ has a blood supply, necessary for transplantation. This could lead to organs being grown from tissues in the body.

Professor Wayne Morrison told the International Confederation of Plastic, Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgery held in Sydney in August.

“The benefits of growing tissues within the body from our own cells means that there is much less chance of rejection,” he said.

NSW directory on-line

The NSW Directory of Breast Cancer Treatment and Services developed by the Breast Cancer Action Group NSW and the NSW Breast Cancer Institute is now on-line at http://www.e-strategy.net.au/bci/directory/default.asp. The on-line directory includes a listing of more than 170 breast cancer specialists and additional resources for women in NSW.

Library Resources Project

In October, in conjunction with our Mini-Fields, we launched our Library Resources Project. We want to make sure that every library across Australia has on its shelves, a number of key resources recommended by BCNA members. It was during the creation of the My Journey kit that these key resources were recognised as being particularly valuable for women and their families affected by breast cancer.

We have sent every community library a listing of the 10 ‘must have’ books and tapes with a package of information to encourage them to highlight these resources within their communities.

The next issue of The Beacon will include the listing as an insert, which you might want to pass on to others.

Bookings for Otis Foundation retreat

The Otis Foundation retreat near Bendigo has now had around 50 guests, all of who have enjoyed the peace and the bush surroundings. This is available, free of charge, to anyone who has experienced breast cancer.

To book, phone Liz Martin, units manager, on (03) 5439 3220, e-mail otisbookings@bigpond.com or visit www.otisfoundation.org.au
YOU'RE NOT YET ON OUR MAILING LIST?

Phone (03) 9805 2500 or 1800 500 258 (free call), or fax (03) 9805 2599, e-mail beacon@bcna.org.au or fill in this coupon and send it to:
Breast Cancer Network Australia, PO Box 4082, Auburn South, Vic 3122
Name: ...........................................................................................................
Address: ........................................................................................................
.................................................................................................................... State: ..................... Postcode: .................
Phone: (   )............................................  E-mail: .........................................

Have you had a diagnosis of breast cancer? ❑ Yes ❑ No

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 4-5: 6th National Breast Care Nurses’ Conference, Carlton Crest Hotel, Brisbane.
Contact: (07) 3854 1611 or www.breastcarenurses2004.com.

March 20: Lymphoedema Association of Victoria’s 2004 Public Seminar, Royal Women’s Hospital, Melbourne.
Contact: 1300 852 850.

March 27: Lymphoedema in the Cycle of Life - a public awareness day, Hilton Hotel, Brisbane, hosted by the Lymphoedema Association of Queensland.
Contact: (07) 3269 1498 and leave details for a form to register your interest in attending.

Contact: BCNA 1800 500 258.

THE BEACON

Keep your face to the sunshine and you will never see the shadows
- Helen Keller

THE BEACON

The Beacon is the magazine of Breast Cancer Network Australia. Editor: Lyn Swinburne, free call 1800 500 258, (03) 9805 2500 or beacon@bcna.org.au
Layout: Substitution
Your comments and items for the next newsletter are welcome.
Send them to PO Box 4082, Auburn South, Victoria 3122.