



BREAST CANCER ACTION'S ANNUAL REPORT 2002

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

What was most remarkable about the year 2002 for Breast Cancer Action?

In short: The conversation changed.

The past year saw an unprecedented amount of public debate around commonly accepted myths that Breast Cancer Action has worked for more than a decade to expose. The false promise of “early” detection, the dangers of hormone replacement therapy, the link between breast cancer and environmental toxins, and our country’s failure to make progress in the so-called war on cancer all made major headlines—challenging the conventional wisdom around breast cancer and, we hope, signaling a growing understanding of what it will take to end the breast cancer epidemic.

As the conversation around breast cancer changes to encompass more complex realities, the public sees a clearer vision of the kinds of changes needed to end the epidemic. Since its founding, BCA has countered misleading messages about breast cancer with the truth, empowering community activists to influence substantive and lasting change at every level.

REFRAMING THE DEBATE

Public dialogue around breast cancer has long been limited to simplistic and flawed messages, such as “Early detection is your best protection” and “We’re winning the war on cancer.” But BCA has worked for years to educate the public about the limitations of mammography, the dangers of a pills-for-prevention approach to health care, and the realities behind the hype generated by researchers suggesting that a cure for breast cancer is around the corner. And in 2002, we finally witnessed a sea change in the broad public debate that surrounds these issues.

A major government study looking at hormone replacement therapy proved in 2002 what BCA and other women’s health activists have been saying for years: long-term hormone replacement therapy increases the risk of breast cancer. And while BCA has long warned that the breast cancer drug tamoxifen carries dangerous risks that outweigh the benefits for many women, only in 2002 did the U.S. Food and Drug Administration add a “black box” warning to the pack-

aging after researchers discovered the drug to be associated with uterine sarcoma, a rare form of uterine cancer that is usually extremely aggressive and difficult to treat.

The National Cancer Institute also issued a report last year admitting that—contrary to its own earlier, repeated claims that breast cancer rates have leveled off since 1987—the rates have in fact been rising steadily every year. For years BCA has countered the government agency’s hype about our nation’s “progress” in the war on cancer, struggling to get the truth out amid more optimistic, yet unsubstantiated, media reports.

Setting off the greatest firestorm in breast cancer last year was the widespread media coverage surrounding a report in the *Lancet*, which found that routine mammography screening does not save lives. Doctors, researchers, and advocates became engaged in a debate in which BCA has been long been a part. Amid the controversy, BCA took the discussion a step further, calling for the public to move beyond the mammography screening debate—which is unlikely to ever be resolved—and to reframe the discussion into one about the myths and realities of breast cancer’s “early detection.”

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT

In yet another testament to the growing acceptance of messages once deemed radical, BCA made great strides this year in advocating for the precautionary principle of public health. Many people have considered it unrealistic to prevail on corporations to limit their use of potentially harmful substances before conclusive evidence of their health effects has been established. But BCA has long pushed a “better safe than sorry” approach, working with other organizations and community leaders to promote safer purchasing practices, with the ultimate goal of changing corporate behavior.

In 2002 BCA helped lead the formation of an environmental health coalition to promote the precautionary principle: the Bay Area Working Group (BAWG), which formalized years of work BCA has done with other organizations concerned about the effect of toxins on human

health. Having successfully worked to pass legislation supporting the precautionary principle in government policy, we continued to push for regulations implementing that principle, helping to stop cancer where it starts and relying on the strength that comes from working side by side with others.

BCA also worked with other organizations to write, produce, and distribute a 41-page report summarizing the vast amount of research data linking synthetic chemicals to breast cancer. "State of the Evidence: What Is the Connection Between Chemicals and Breast Cancer?" introduced a five-point plan to reduce cancer-causing chemicals in our bodies and our environment. BCA helped organize a presentation for a California senate committee in February and went to Sacramento with other environmental health activists to urge state lawmakers to act on the evidence cited in the report.

The long-awaited release of results from the ten-year Long Island Breast Cancer Study in 2002 also helped bring BCA's concerns about environmental links to breast cancer to the forefront of public debate. While the study results proved disappointing to many breast cancer activists, BCA took the opportunity to point out (in op-eds and articles about the report) that the study not only showed a link between breast cancer and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)—toxins created by cigarette smoke, motor vehicle exhaust, and smoking or burning meat—but also indicated the type of further research that will help us understand why so many of us are getting sick.

BCA also played a key role in convening the first International Summit on Breast Cancer and the Environment, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The event, held in Santa Cruz, California, in June, brought together for the first time international researchers, community members, and breast cancer and environmental health advocates to work toward new approaches to breast cancer research and policy, emphasizing the value of including the community as a partner in all aspects of planning and implementation.

BUILDING STRENGTH THROUGH COALITIONS

Combining forces to promote true breast cancer prevention was also the goal behind our work with Prevention First, a coalition of independent health organizations working to shift the emphasis in disease prevention away from drugs and procedures that put human health at risk. Members of the coalition conveyed public health concerns at several medical and scientific conferences around the country this year, including the U.S. Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program's Era of Hope conference, the annual San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium, the World Conference on Breast Cancer, and the American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual meeting. We also worked to strengthen public dialogue on the dangers of direct-to-consumer advertising and the importance of the precautionary principle in public health policy through media outreach. Our efforts resulted in letters, op-eds, and commentary in newspapers and magazines

throughout the United States and Canada, including the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Nation*, and National Public Radio's "Marketplace."

IDENTIFYING NEW ISSUES

Of course, major shifts in thinking require time to take root, and as some of BCA's longtime efforts to educate the public about the realities of breast cancer finally reached the mainstream in 2002, we worked to create space for further change in the breast cancer movement. BCA launched a campaign in 2002 to encourage the public to think about breast cancer fundraising in an entirely different light, opening up a broad new dialogue around the disease and pushing for greater corporate accountability.

As mainstream corporate promotions for Breast Cancer Awareness Month urge consumers to cook, clean, and shop for the cure, BCA's newest campaign—Think Before You Pink—urges individuals to think twice before supporting the ubiquitous cause-related marketing gimmicks. In October we launched a new web site, www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org, and took out an ad in the national edition of the *New York Times* highlighting corporate "pinkwashers" that exploit breast cancer to sell their products. The campaign—whose launch generated coverage by a wide range of media outlets, including NBC's "Nightly News," CNN, *USA Today*, and the *Wall Street Journal*—encourages consumers to look critically at corporate claims of "doing good."

On one level, Think Before You Pink takes corporations to task for profiting from people's emotions around the disease. At the same time, the campaign teaches people that as long as they believe they're doing something meaningful about breast cancer by buying into corporate marketing schemes, the real work that needs to be done to achieve more effective treatments, true prevention, and universal access to care will continue to be underfunded and ignored. Ultimately, the campaign is a call for a revamped and coordinated breast cancer research agenda.

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

Think Before You Pink is an extension of BCA's work to track and report the real story behind the money flooding into the cause, which made great strides on other fronts. Our campaign to make cosmetics giant Avon more accountable in the way it raises and distributes its breast cancer funds achieved a major victory in 2002: the company dropped its association with a for-profit production company that ate up a large portion of the money raised by participants in its huge fundraising walks, and the production company went out of business soon afterward.

BCA continues to urge Avon to fund research into true breast cancer prevention and to fund organizations most in need in the regions that host its walkathons, instead of draining the resources of those communities and putting them into large medical centers that are already tremendously well funded. And we've developed new materials—brochures, postcards,

and sample letters—to make it easier for individuals all over the world to join us in this effort.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

BCA is constantly working to make reliable information accessible to anyone who needs it, whether through printed materials, our vast and searchable web site, or the toll-free telephone number to our office. This year BCA staff responded to thousands of phone calls and e-mails requesting information on a myriad of issues connected to breast cancer. BCA's bimonthly newsletter, distributed to more than 10,000 individuals and institutions, included coverage of controversial issues such as abortion and breast cancer, a new and experimental form of radiation therapy, and psychological issues following a diagnosis, along with book reviews, member profiles, and critical analyses of research released at international oncology conferences. Subscriptions to our monthly e-alert, full of up-to-the-minute news and action alerts about breast cancer issues, nearly doubled in 2002.

BCA's web site (www.bcaction.org), a comprehensive source of information about breast cancer issues for individuals around the globe, also won a 2002 Webby Award, the leading honor for the world's best web sites. Voted the people's choice for best health site on the Internet, our site enables users to search our archive of past newsletters, get answers to frequently asked questions about breast cancer, find out more information about BCA's campaigns, make a donation to support our work, sign up to volunteer, and much more.

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

All of BCA's work is fueled by the energy of hundreds of volunteers, and the addition of a full-time community organizer to our staff in 2002 connected our activist task forces with greater opportunities to do something that

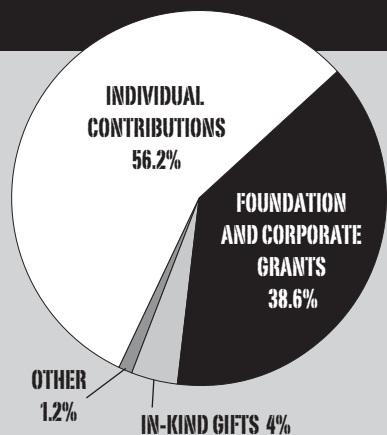
matters about the breast cancer epidemic. BCA activists sent postcards to San Francisco's city hall, urging lawmakers to implement policies based on the precautionary principle. BCA task force members marched in San Francisco's eighth annual cancer industry tour of corporate polluters and their public relations firms. And the Lifetime Television Network named BCA task force member Raven~Light a "Breast Cancer Heroine," honoring her courage for putting her body on the line to make the realities of the disease—including her own mastectomy scar—visible.

Meanwhile, hundreds turned out for BCA's largest organizing event of the year: our fifth annual town meeting for breast cancer activists, which featured workshops, a dedication ceremony, and a rousing speech by acclaimed journalist Barbara Ehrenreich, who shared the story of her own breast cancer diagnosis and the disgust she felt upon discovering the mainstream breast cancer establishment's infantilizing "pink ribbon" approach to the disease. The daylong event galvanized activists on a range of issues around breast cancer, from corporate accountability to environmental health.

BCA will continue to report on where the money goes, what research is—or isn't—being done, and what stands in the way of greater access to health care. We will continue to advocate for change when what we're seeing is not moving us toward our vision of a healthier world. And we'll continue to provide valuable information to anyone who needs it, empowering activists around the globe.

BCA has consistently been ahead of the curve in working to change the conversation around breast cancer. And as the realities we have long worked to expose finally enter public debate, we will continue to look ahead, framing the dialogue required to create the changes necessary to end the scourge of breast cancer.

BCA FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2002



REVENUES

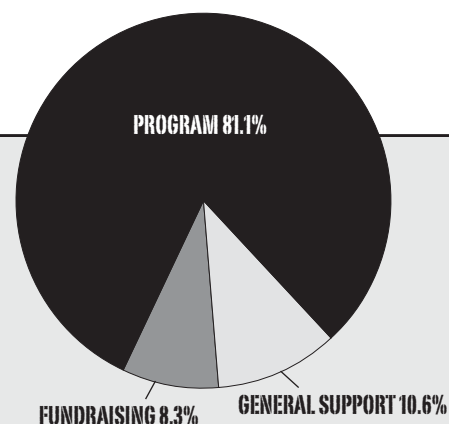
Individual Contributions: \$402,448

Foundation and Corporate Grants: \$277,001

In-kind Gifts: \$28,654

Other Revenue: \$8,554

Total Revenue: \$716,657



EXPENSES

Program: \$693,841

General Support: \$90,955

Fundraising: \$71,373

Total Expenses: \$856,169

BCA SUPPORTERS

Breast Cancer Action's work to end the breast cancer epidemic would not be possible without the support of our donors. Their generous commitment to BCA's programs is helping to change the conversation about breast cancer. We are deeply grateful to the people and institutions listed below who made gifts of \$250 or more in 2002, and to all those who support our efforts. A complete list of donors who made a gift of \$50 or more is available at www.bcaction.org.

\$75,000-150,000

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SPECIAL THANKS

The following people and organizations gave their time and products to advance BCA's work in 2002:

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