



BREAST CANCER ACTION

ANNUAL REPORT 2003

COMING TOGETHER: MOVING FROM ILLNESS TO ACTIVISM

Founded by a group of women who realized the power of community, Breast Cancer Action was born from a need for a grassroots organization with a unique understanding of the political, economic, and social context of breast cancer.

Today BCA's mission is to carry the voices of people affected by breast cancer in order to inspire and compel the changes necessary to end this epidemic. Never straying far from our community-based roots, and with a keen eye toward structural change, BCA organizes people to do something besides worry about breast cancer.

2003 was an extraordinary year for our organization and our movement. We came together in entirely new ways. New bridges were built. New steps were taken. Bold moves forward were made. Our community grew exponentially and our critical messages—that every woman should have access to information and care, that we need true prevention of breast cancer, and that we must develop more effective and less toxic treatments—reached an ever-growing audience. Together we demanded, and ultimately effected, lasting change.

INFORMATION: THE KEY TO ACTIVISM

Information is an essential precursor to action. BCA has always been committed to providing accurate, reliable, and honest information about breast cancer. We reach the public through our English- and Spanish-language newsletters, our web site, and a toll-free number. By providing information, BCA both enables people to make informed decisions for themselves and supports their activism.

In 2003, we mailed the *BCA Newsletter* to an expanding list of more than 12,000 individuals and institutions. We published medical news and analyses, coverage of controversial subjects, explorations of psychological issues following a diagnosis, book reviews, and inspiring activist profiles. Provided free to anyone who requests it, our bimonthly newsletter is regarded as the best in the breast cancer movement.

BCA's Spanish-language newsletter, *Saber Es Poder* ("Knowledge Is Power"), focuses on issues specific to Spanish-speaking communities. We distributed more than 1,500 copies of each issue to 250 organizations and individuals in 2003.

We also function as a resource through our acclaimed web site and toll-free telephone number (800/2-STOP-BC). In 2003 we responded to thousands of phone calls and e-mails. BCA's web site (www.bcaction.org), which received an average of 25,000 visits per month in 2003, serves as a comprehensive source of information for individuals around the globe. In turn, what we hear from patients informs the work we do. The web site and our monthly e-alert provide opportunities for individuals to take action on important issues.

WORKING TOGETHER, SPEAKING OUT, MAKING CHANGE

As a grassroots organization—"action" is a key part of our name—bringing people together is imperative for BCA. The combined power of our voices is what propels this movement.

In 2003 BCA's programs took a number of new steps: we took on the American Cancer Society about the need for balanced information on mammograms, confronted cosmetics companies' exploitation of breast cancer for marketing purposes, and laid the groundwork for the Breast Cancer Puzzle Project (formerly the Rachel Carson Project).

Puzzle Project The Breast Cancer Puzzle Project is a new way of approaching breast cancer research and the funding of it. The ultimate goal is to coordinate research so that we can finally get the answers we need to bring us to a cure for—and real prevention of—this disease. BCA took the Puzzle Project to the nation's capital, participating in a workshop on breast cancer and the environment hosted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Women's Health.

Prevention First BCA stepped up our efforts with Prevention First, a coalition of independent health organizations working to shift the emphasis in treatment away from drugs and procedures that put human health at risk. The coalition also spotlights the dangers of direct-to-consumer advertising. Addressing the risks of prescribing pills for the "prevention" of breast cancer, BCA joined the coalition in a panel discussion for the American Public Health Association on how the pharmaceutical industry is dangerous to women's health. BCA brought the Prevention First message to an even broader audience with the launch of the coalition's web site, www.preventionfirstcoalition.org and with substantial media outreach efforts. Our letters to the editor around "prevention" appeared in the *New York Times* and the *Nation* magazine.

Abortion and Breast Cancer In an effort to quell a controversy created by the National Institutes of Health when it unilaterally removed a fact sheet from its web site denying the existence of a link between abortion and breast cancer, the National Cancer Institute held a conference on the topic. BCA worked with allies in the women's health movement in pointing to countless studies that refute such a link and condemned the use of false "science" and the exploitation of breast cancer to promote a political agenda. Our statements reached many readers via the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Boston Globe*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *New York Times*.

Silicone Breast Implants When the Inamed corporation

campaigning for the reintroduction of silicone breast implants, BCA presented testimony citing numerous safety concerns to the Food and Drug Administration committee hearing the issue. With others, BCA also signed a letter to the FDA commissioner and to Congress. The work of BCA and women's health allies resulted in the FDA's rejection of Inamed's plan, deferring the reintroduction of these implants.

FDA Advocacy Advocacy within the FDA is an important part of BCA's work related to the treatment of breast cancer. In 2003, we submitted testimony to the FDA's Oncologic Drug Advisory Committee (ODAC) urging that resources be allocated to enforcing Phase IV postmarketing studies. These studies help identify the side effects that come with long-term use of drugs and that therefore are not seen when drugs are quickly approved. A member of BCA's board of directors serves as a patient advocate on the ODAC, bringing our independent voice to FDA deliberations.

Breast Cancer Screening BCA also stepped up when the American Cancer Society released its revised breast cancer screening guidelines, which again recommend annual mammograms for women over 40—about which BCA has grave concerns—but discourage breast self-exams. *USA Today* and "NBC Nightly News" sought our help in preparing news segments on the topic.

STOPPING CANCER WHERE IT STARTS: ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

Finding the keys to true prevention—that is, stopping breast cancer before it starts—is a critical component of our work. When the vast majority of women with breast cancer have *no known risk factors*, and when cancer rates continue to rise, we must look at the impact of environmental factors.

Precautionary Principle BCA has long advocated the precautionary principle of public health. This philosophy

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 us come together to move from illness to activism. We are deeply grateful to the people and institutions listed here who made gifts of \$250 or more in 2003, 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.

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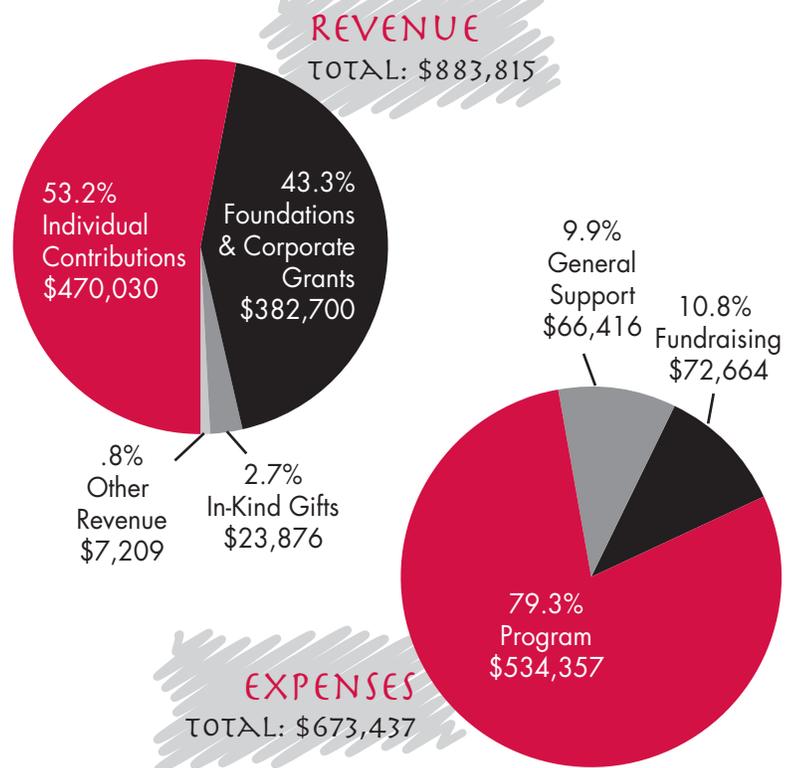
embraces the concept of “First, do no harm” or, more simply, “Better safe than sorry.” Despite warnings that a burgeoning coalition of relatively small organizations could not persuade corporations to limit the use of potentially harmful substances before conclusive evidence of their health effects had been established, we succeeded in advancing the precautionary principle.

Environmental Coalition Continuing our work with the Bay Area Working Group, an environmental health coalition formed to promote the precautionary principle in the San Francisco Bay Area, we worked to change public policy and promote safer purchasing practices, with the ultimate goal of changing corporate behavior. The cities of Berkeley and San Francisco adopted resolutions embracing the principle. San Francisco went further, passing an ordinance with the precautionary principle as the guiding philosophy for its citywide environmental code.

Limiting Pesticide Exposure BCA activists supported legislation in California aimed at limiting human pesticide exposures in schoolyards and water, and participated in a statewide Environmental Health Lobby Day. We also distributed our updated report, “State of the Evidence: What Is the Connection Between Chemicals and Breast Cancer?”

Phthalates and Breast Cancer Our work educating the public about chemicals like phthalates (found in everything from nail polish to hairspray to plastic water bottles) caught the eye of the chemical industry. We received a letter from the American Chemical Council—an industry front group—“educating” us about phthalates and assuring us of their safety. Such attention from the chemical industry is a testament to the importance of our work. This is one situation in which the opposition we generate is an excellent gauge of our progress.

BCA FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2003



FOLLOWING THE MONEY: TAKING ON COSMETICS GIANTS

BCA took efforts to limit exposure to toxins to a new level, going after the cosmetics industry's penchant for breast cancer-related cause-marketing while manufacturing products that may be linked to breast cancer and other diseases. We added a new component to the Think Before You Pink campaign for its second year. We gave people the tools to look at corporate marketing schemes and breast cancer fundraising in new ways and to push for greater corporate accountability. We expanded

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the campaign web site, www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org, to include information on chemicals in cosmetics and to list companies whose products do not contain parabens and phthalates. Activists responded in large numbers, contacting cosmetics companies by phone, mail, and e-mail.

During October, which we call Breast Cancer Industry Month, BCA placed a quarter-page advertisement in the *New York Times* posing the question, "The Cosmetics Industry and Breast Cancer: Philanthropy or Hypocrisy?" We pointed out that while major cosmetics companies—from Avon and Revlon to Estée Lauder—are marketing pink-ribbon products to "support the fight against breast cancer," dozens of their products contain chemicals that may be linked to breast cancer. BCA has also called for these industry leaders to phase out these chemicals altogether, noting that corporate conscience belongs in a company's products.

Think Before You Pink is just one aspect of BCA's longtime work to track the real story behind the money flooding into the breast cancer cause. As a member group of Follow the Money: An Alliance for Accountability in Breast Cancer, BCA ventured into the world of shareholder activism. Buying one share of stock in Avon, we gained a voice in the direction of the cosmetics giant. Linking arms with the socially responsible investment community and our breast cancer allies, we submitted resolutions to company shareholders urging Avon to study the feasibility of removing phthalates and parabens from its products. Our efforts garnered enough votes to keep the issue before the shareholders in years to come.

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

BCA's work is fueled by the energy of hundreds of volunteer activists from coast to coast. One of our most up-to-the-minute ways of keeping our activists informed and energized is through our monthly e-alert. Chock-full of news and action

items, the e-alert list doubled in membership in 2003.

BCA's visibility reached a whole new level at the 2003 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium—the largest annual scientific meeting on breast cancer in the United States. We organized local activists in San Antonio to attend, held an activist meeting in the midst of the symposium, and reached thousands of people with our messages about what breast cancer patients need, through our first-ever exhibit booth at the symposium.

Lifetime Television Network named BCA board member Natalie Compagni Portis a Breast Cancer Hero for her dedication to the movement at the annual Stop Breast Cancer for Life awards.

Back at home, hundreds turned out for our largest organizing event of the year: the sixth annual Town Meeting, entitled "Coming Together: Moving From Illness to Activism." The day-long event was a huge success, organizing activists on an array of issues around breast cancer, from corporate accountability to environmental health. For the first time at a Town Meeting, BCA provided interpretation in Spanish and Cantonese. Faith Fancher, an Emmy-winning television news reporter who tragically died in the fall of 2003, delivered the deeply moving keynote speech about the importance of supporting each other in the face of this disease.

CONTINUING OUR WORK, MOVING FORWARD

Breast Cancer Action had a banner year in 2003, reaching out to diverse communities, new activists, and seasoned allies. We continued to advocate for change that moves us toward our vision of a healthier world. As we provided valuable information to people affected by breast cancer, we empowered women and men across the United States and beyond its borders. As we move forward, we continue to be the bad girls of breast cancer, and we'll be here as long as it takes, bringing us closer to the day when this epidemic is only a painful memory.

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