



Challenging Assumptions, Inspiring Change

Dear Friends,

We are delighted to share with you a summary of Breast Cancer Action's work in 2008. This summary reflects that when we don't accept the status quo and we demand positive change, great victories happen.

When BCA was founded in 1990, we committed to being the watchdog of the breast cancer movement and to reporting to our constituency on what was—and wasn't—happening in the world of breast cancer treatment and politics.

As reflected in this summary, our work in 2008 made sure that the interests of people with and at risk for breast cancer were front and center when it came to information, drug approval, environmental health, corporate accountability, and the social inequities that underlie the breast cancer epidemic.

As we moved forward to implement the strategic priorities that we adopted in 2007, we told the FDA what we thought the standards should be for drug approval. We also took on pinkwashing in a major way by challenging General Mills to stop using rBGH to make their "pink ribboned" Yoplait yogurt. Whenever possible, we made sure that the social injustices related to breast cancer occurring in too many communities got the attention it so often doesn't.

We know that it was because of you—your support and your activism—that Breast Cancer Action challenged peoples' assumptions about breast cancer and inspired and compelled the changes necessary to end the breast cancer epidemic. We are deeply grateful.

Barbara A. Brenner
Executive Director

Claudia Cappio
Chair of the Board

Carrying the Voices

BCA's mission is to carry the voices of people affected by breast cancer to inspire and compel the changes necessary to end the epidemic. In 2008, we took advantage of opportunities to implement our mission through our strategic priorities. We worked to extend conversations about research on breast cancer beyond genes and biology and into broader, more inclusive areas that address patient needs, environmental factors, health inequities, and social justice issues. This year our membership grew to 20,000. We reached over 13,741 people each month with our monthly e-alerts, and our two web sites (www.bcaction.org and www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org) provided crucial information for newly diagnosed women about how to take care of themselves, and much more. We published over 80,000 copies of *The Source* and 4,000 copies of *Saber Es Poder*, "knowledge is power," our Spanish language newsletter. A toll-free telephone and e-mail information and referral service (in English and Spanish) served more than 3,000 people in the United States and beyond. Outreach presentations (some conducted in Spanish) to local student groups, community organizations, and the corporate community reached 2,500 people nationwide and covered a variety of topics, including FDA advocacy, screening, diagnosis, treatment, safe cosmetics, and environmental links to breast cancer.



Additionally, BCA staff and volunteers attended a myriad of other events around the country, answering questions and providing educational materials. Our work connecting with and providing information to people affected by breast cancer is the underpinning of all we do at BCA.

Putting Patients First

Our patients-first advocacy work continues to set us apart from other breast cancer organizations because we continue to ask the tough questions that no one else is asking. More effective, less toxic, and less costly breast cancer treatments will only be possible if the balance of power in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) drug and device approval process shifts away from the pharmaceutical industry and toward the public interest. We continue to remain independent from drug-company funding and to demand stronger standards at the FDA. Our integrity makes BCA a trusted and recognized voice among patient advocacy groups as well as at the FDA itself. Our list of concerns with the FDA continues to grow, but so does our vigilance in monitoring them. In 2008, we:

- Called for the removal of Erythropoiesis-stimulating agents (ESAs) from the cancer treatment market.¹ The FDA responded by limiting use of the drugs.
- Worked to keep Bevacizumab (Avastin) off the market for use in the treatment of metastatic breast cancer. Despite the lack of data demonstrating Avastin's efficacy in extending or improving the quality of patients' lives, the FDA approved the drug over the recommendation of its advisory committee. We continue to keep patients informed on all emerging data on the drug.
- Provided information to FDA patient advocates regarding the serious side effects of bisphosphonate drugs, which can lead to osteonecrosis of the jaw. Medical professionals and pharmaceutical representatives often downplay this side effect.

¹ ESAs are drugs that were marketed as reducing fatigue and anemia related to chemotherapy. They were never shown to do this, and for some kinds of cancer, including breast cancer, giving these drugs made the b/c outcomes worse. See the letter we sent the FDA at <http://bcaction.org/index.php?page=fda-letter-february-27-2008-2>.



- Met with pharmaceutical company representatives concerning the many issues that relate to breast cancer drug and device use, approval, and pricing.
- Advocated for systemic changes in major breast cancer research programs. Meeting with leaders of the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program (DDBCRP), we urged fundamental changes to strengthen the program's charge to facilitate the creation of new models of collaboration and faster translation of new developments from lab to clinic. We suggested more diversity in the selection of the program's leadership and urged that advocates selected to participate in the program's peer review be drawn from those trained by various programs, including the one run by the American Association for Cancer Research.
- Strengthened our commitment to offering patients accurate information about treatment side effects by disseminating online and via direct mail our corrected and updated report on the effects of aromatase inhibitors (AI) on breast cancer patients. This report made several recommendations regarding new areas of research for future trials, including:
 - AI use and side effects in younger women.
 - AI use and side effects in women who have had their menopause induced surgically or pharmaceutically.

- AI use with and without prior use of tamoxifen in women of all ages.
- Long-term side effects in women of all ages taking AIs, including systematic monitoring for bone, joint, cognitive, and nerve side effects, with comparisons to control populations.

Creating Healthy Environments

Involuntary exposure to toxins in our environment continues to place women at risk for breast cancer. Of the 80,000 synthetic chemicals available on the market today, fewer than 10 percent have been tested for their effects on our health. We took concrete steps this year to encourage people to look beyond their personal interests to advance the policy changes that will protect everyone.

Cosmetic Advocacy

The FDA does not review the safety of personal care products before they are sold to consumers,



and because manufacturers don't have to report to the FDA the ingredients they use, most do not. To change this, we:

- Worked with the salon worker community as a member of the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative to put pressure on nail polish manufacturers to remove dibutyl phthalate (DBP), toluene, and formaldehyde (all linked to breast cancer and reproductive health problems) from their products.

- Urged CalOSHA's Health Expert Advisory Committee to pay close attention to these ingredients. We were also heavily involved in ensuring the implementation of the California Safe Cosmetics Act.
- Worked closely with the California Dept. of Health Services on implanting the California Safe Cosmetics Act.

Green Economy

We are committed to assuring that chemicals put into commercial products are known to be safe before people are exposed to them. In 2008, we:



- Conducted outreach for CHANGE—Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy—which is working on a plan to change how chemicals are introduced into the environment. Our goal was to secure a commitment from CHANGE to involve the communities most affected by toxic exposures in developing and implementing this initiative.
- Advocated for the connection between environmental toxins and breast cancer when the California Women's Foundation Environmental Justice/Reproductive Justice Cohort Project invited us to lead workshops on this issue at its annual retreat.

- Endorsed regulatory and legislative action to ban bisphenol-A in food and beverage containers. We continued to monitor the progress of BPA reviews at the FDA.

Think Before You Pink®

2008 marked the seventh year of BCA's Think Before You Pink® campaign. This year our highly successful media, education, and advocacy campaign focused on "pinkwashing" companies that place pink ribbons on their products and publicly announce that they care about breast cancer while making products that are linked to the disease. The 2008 campaign highlighted General Mills (GM), the manufacturer of Yoplait yogurt. Yoplait is sold through a "pink ribbon" campaign to raise money for breast cancer but is made with milk from cows stimulated with recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH), an artificial hormone linked to breast cancer. We asked our members to urge GM to stop using rBGH-stimulated milk. Thousands of people from around the nation took action to demand that GM stop the hypocrisy.

Eliminating Social Inequities

The differences in breast cancer incidence and outcomes are about far more than lifestyle choices and biology. We continued to look at breast cancer incidence through the social justice, reproductive justice, and environmental justice lens. If serious progress is to be made in eliminating the differences in breast cancer as they affect diverse groups of people, we must reframe how scientists, medical



researchers, doctors, advocates, politicians, and the media approach this disease, and insist that social inequities are a root cause for breast cancer. Working in collaboration with our allies in California, we:

- Advocated for legislative policy changes at the state and local levels to ensure that all women with cancer have access to quality care through a state-guaranteed health system. A policy change of this kind would pave the way to single-payer health care in California and substantially affect how women of different socioeconomic backgrounds receive health care.
- Produced and distributed our Spanish language newsletter *Saber Es Poder* worldwide to clinics treating Spanish speakers. We focused

cancer research to examine unanswered questions in breast cancer. We took direct action and inspired others to preserve the CBCRP after plans were announced to eliminate or greatly reduce the program's planning, evaluation, and dissemination functions. A BCA board member will serve as vice chair on the CBCRP Advisory Council to help prevent further attrition and keep the special research initiatives moving forward.

Donate to Breast Cancer Action Now

Share our achievements with everyone you know. Your support, now more than ever, enables us to continue carrying the voices of women with breast cancer.



on issues affecting the Latina community rather than simply translating our English language newsletter *The Source*. Highlighted information included safer cleaning products, a comprehensive list of treatments and devices currently available on the market, and the names of the companies that manufacture them.

- Worked with the California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP) to create Special Research Initiatives on environmental links to breast cancer and on breast cancer disparities. These initiatives are critical to reframing breast

Together, we will continue to confront the challenges. Together, we will end this epidemic.

Stay informed. Sign up for our quarterly newsletter, *The Source*.

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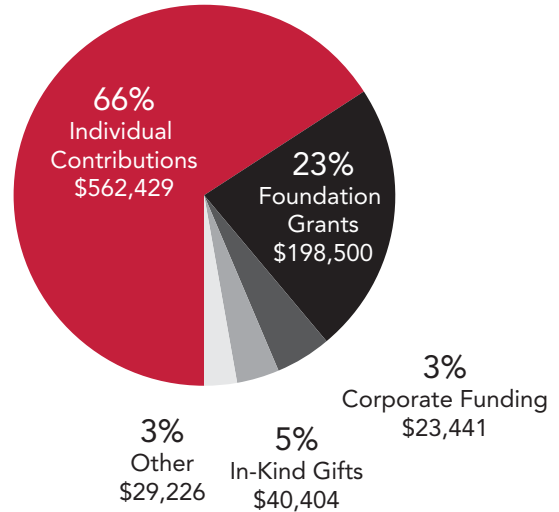
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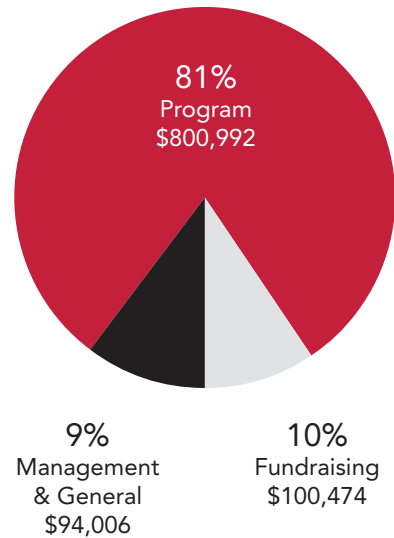
Revenue

Total: \$854,000



Expenses

Total: \$995,472



The financial information shown here was derived from Breast Cancer Action's audited financial statements. The difference between revenue and expenses in 2008 was covered by board designated net assets from 2007 reserve funds. Copies of the audited financial statements may be obtained by contacting BCA.



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