

Women At Risk

FALL 2011

20th Anniversary
Support and
Education Edition

Dear Friends,

Women At Risk's 20th anniversary year has been a time of growth.

We have added services for breast cancer patients, such as free wigs for low-income women in treatment, and increased our advocacy work by hosting events and sending staff and volunteers to speak out in Albany and Washington, D.C.

We have continued to expand our reach among the next generation of breast cancer activists—from high school students to young professionals—through our work with GOPINK and the Young Professionals Committee.

We also hosted our first play, *Pink: The Chronicles of BC Jenny*, a phenomenal production that brought together our community around an inspiring story of survivorship.

While all of these developments move us forward, this issue of our Newsletter will look back at what we have accomplished in patient support

and education since our inception.

Inside, you will read an interview with Davida Deutsch, a former board member and longtime WAR volunteer whose own battle with breast cancer inspired her to envision, create, and implement programs such as the support group, the Stacey Garil Womack Resource Library, and much more. Her dedicated work built the foundation for the many support programs that continue to serve thousands of women each year.

If you missed the Spring Newsletter's research retrospective, visit our website, www.womenatrisknyc.org, to download a copy.

Thank you for celebrating this important anniversary with us, and we hope to see you at the Laurie Bass Sklaver Annual Symposium in November.

Susan Furst, *Founder*
& Bonnie Pressman, *President*

Please join us!



The Laurie Bass Sklaver Annual Symposium

*Empower Yourself:
Lifestyle and Wellness Choices for Women
at High Risk for, or with, Breast Cancer*

Monday, November 14th, 2011

Reception: 5:30–6:00 PM • Program: 6:00–8:00 PM

UJA-Federation of New York
130 East 59th Street, 7th Floor, New York, NY

To RSVP or for more information,
call (212) 305-5917
or email info@womenatrisknyc.org.

Free Cancer Screenings

Twice a year, uninsured women may visit the breast center at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center to receive mammograms and cervical and colorectal cancer screenings free of charge. Since its inception, WAR has partnered with the Columbia University Breast Cancer Screening Partnership to provide more than:

1,000 mammograms

1,000 cervical cancer screenings

500 colorectal screenings



To Contact Women At Risk:

Call (212) 305-9525
or email
info@womenatrisknyc.org

Visit Women At Risk
online at
www.womenatrisknyc.org
and
www.womenatriskblog.com

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20 Lives, 20 Ways

In honor of our 20th
Anniversary year, WAR is
profiling 20 individuals
whose lives have been
touched by some aspect
of the many research,
education, and support
programs for women
at high risk for and with
breast cancer we have
offered over the past
two decades.

To view the series, visit
www.womenatriskblog.com.

Please consider making
a donation in support of
our 20th anniversary year.
Contact Eric Dubinsky,
Development Officer at
212-305-4486 or
erd9025@nyp.org.

Support Services: A Q&A with Davida Deutsch

Since Women At Risk was founded in 1991 to further research and act as a resource for women at high-risk for breast cancer, the organization has progressively expanded its support services, educational programs, and resources for women who have been diagnosed with the disease.

Davida Deutsch, a former board member and volunteer at WAR for over 10 years, founded many of the support services that continue to this day. WAR caught up with her to look back on the origins of many of these influential programs.

How did your relationship with Women At Risk start?

I got my first breast cancer diagnosis in June of '92, and there were no support services whatsoever. I went to a support group given by SHARE, and they asked me afterwards if I would train to be a group leader. I started going to training sessions that year, but it was put off because 11 months later, I got a diagnosis in the other breast. Later, they asked me if I would lead a group at SHARE, but I said what I really wanted to do was start something at Columbia Presbyterian.

What were some of the challenges you faced in setting up the support group?

You have to remember; we're talking about a time when support was very challenging for a lot of people. Doctors thought that it would threaten their relationship with their patients and that hearing other people's stories might make the patients fearful. They didn't understand that it was something that could complement their work. So, I had to go through a whole process of proving to the staff at the hospital that we could work together. August of 1994 was when the first support group took place.

You also started the WAR Resource Library. Why did you insist that all of the volunteers be breast cancer survivors?



"The first meeting was very hard for me, but I got very comfortable. There really is no drama there, it's just real life stuff that women are dealing with. I found it to be a very good, nurturing experience for my life."

—Support group attendee



The purpose was to give women hope. When you get that diagnosis, you think, "That's it, I'm going to die." And then, if five minutes later you meet somebody who was diagnosed two, three, or ten years ago and is still here, you are not as frightened.

What inspired you to create the Community Program, which provides patient navigation and support for Hispanic women from the neighborhoods surrounding the hospital?

In my support group, you'd see that there were women who would come and couldn't understand the language. And the majority of Hispanic patients didn't even seek out that kind of thing, so I knew we needed someone who could reach out to those communities.

Your work at Women At Risk set up most of the services that are still supporting women today. Are you proud of all that you accomplished?

As exhausting as it was, it was truly one of the most rewarding times of my life. Two years ago, I went for a checkup at the hospital, and I heard a familiar voice. A woman from the support group was there, and she said, "You saved my life." All of the women became very much a part of me. It was a sad but uplifting thing, because I was helping so many people get through the biggest trauma of their lives, and I felt so lucky to be able to do it. ■

“The fear of the unknown is overwhelming. A navigator adds tremendous value and support for patients and their families.”

—NewYork-Presbyterian/Columbia breast cancer patient

Patient Navigation & Support

The Patient Navigation program began in 2007, and since then, Nancy Singleton, WAR’s Patient Navigator, has helped countless newly-diagnosed women navigate their breast cancer treatment and recovery. Nancy helps facilitate appointments, connects patients with additional services such as financial assistance, nutritional information, and genetic counseling, and provides critical emotional support.

WAR’s Community Coordinator, Jenny Saldaña, acts as a Patient Navigator for Hispanic patients at the hospital by providing Spanish-language one-on-one support and facilitating a Spanish support group. This outreach is particularly important since breast cancer often carries a stigma in the Latina community, and overall patient outcomes are generally worse.

In 2010, WAR conducted a survey of the breast cancer patients at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center who met with Women At Risk’s Patient Navigator during the course of their treatment. Of those who responded to the survey:

86%

said that the Patient Navigation program significantly improved their treatment experience.

86%

said that the Patient Navigator provided them with tools or assistance they did not receive anywhere else.

95%

said that they would recommend the service to others.

The Power of Knowledge— The Laurie Bass Sklaver Annual Symposium

Empowering women and families affected by breast cancer with the most up-to-date information on the prevention, treatment, and management of the disease has always been a central part of WAR’s mission.

To that end, we’ve offered dozens of lectures and symposia in both English and Spanish since our inception.

In 2004, our main educational event, the annual symposium, was named in memory of Laurie Bass Sklaver, a former Women At Risk board member and president who believed that knowledge was a woman’s most powerful weapon in the war against breast cancer.

Since then, an average of 200 people have attended and gained life-saving information and insight from presentations by physicians, healthcare professionals, and peers each year. Here are some of the diverse topics we’ve touched on:

2010—Decisions, Decisions: Managing Increased Risk for Breast & Ovarian Cancer

2009—It’s Time to Get Personal: Breast Cancer & the Future of Individualized Care

2008—Survivorship: The Next Frontier in Breast Cancer

2007—Mind & Body: Sexuality, Intimacy and Breast Cancer

2006—Managing Your Health in The Age of Information Overload

2005—It’s the Same, but Different: Breast Cancer in Young Women

2004—Women At Risk—Yesterday, Today, & Tomorrow—On the Leading Edge



Support Groups

Breast Cancer Support Group

For dates, times and location, call Nancy Singleton at (212) 342-0297.

Spanish-Language Breast Cancer Support Group

For dates, times and location, call Jenny Saldaña at (212) 305-9894.

Co-sponsored by SHARE and Social Work Services, NYP/CUMC.

The Stacey Garil Womack Resource Library

Staffed by breast cancer survivors and offering confidential one-on-one support.

Hours of operation: Monday–Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Spanish-language support is available on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 1 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

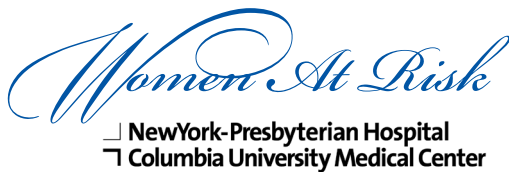
The difference is you...

Thanks to all of our volunteers who make a difference every day in the resource library:

Helene Bland
Clare Cooper
Marianne Glasel
Renee Goodman
Rita Heller
Laura Minella
Sheila Mulvey
Joanne Parent
Karen Small
Helen Tarr
Angela Vallaro

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The Stacey Garil Womack Resource Library

Women At Risk's Resource Library, staffed by volunteers who are breast cancer survivors, opened to the public in 1996. Since then, it has provided confidential one-on-one support and information to over

2,500 newly-diagnosed breast cancer patients and their families annually. In 2008, Bernard and Ethel Garil generously agreed to fund the library's services, and it was renamed The Stacey Garil Womack Resource Library in memory of their daughter.

Library volunteers have also distributed hundreds of Pink Ribbon Kits over the years, which are generously provided by the Libby Ross Breast Cancer Foundation. Pink Ribbon Kits provide valuable information and comfort items to help combat the isolation and fear that accompany a diagnosis.

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