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## Loudouners Focus On Breast Cancer Support

By Margaret Morton

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Spending time around Loudon, it is difficult not to know that October is Breast Cancer Awareness month as numerous community groups, and whole communities, work to highlight the challenges faced by cancer patients and their families and to raise money to support medical research.

Joan McGorry is on the all-volunteer board of The Loudoun Breast Health Network, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that was founded in 2005. Six of its seven board members are breast cancer survivors, dedicated to promoting breast health awareness, education, support and wellness, according to the network's mission statement.

McGorry, who is the sole board member who has not been afflicted with the disease, said she got involved because she wanted to help. Two friends asked her to join them, and she said, "yes, I'll see what I can do." She helps with publicity. She's even roped in her daughter, who is working on getting a Web site up and running next month.

The statistics for breast cancer are scary, McGorry said, noting that 80 percent to 95 percent of those diagnosed with the disease have no prior family history. Mammography can detect breast cancer when it is in its earliest, most treatable stages, up to two years before the individual or doctor can do so, according to the American Cancer Foundation.

"One million women have breast cancer, and do not know it. That's scary," McGorry said.

To help educate the public about the disease and its risk factors as well as the importance of early detection, the LBHN promotes rapid diagnosis and treatment and offers programs to provide emotion, spiritual and day-to-day support to those diagnosed with the disease and their families throughout the treatment period and beyond.

Educational programs and free public health speakers are offered, along with programs to provide diagnostic tools, such as mammograms, to underserved populations. A long-term goal is to lease or own a mammography van to bring the tools closer to those in need. Support is given in a variety of ways, including the "Guardian Angel" program for those recently diagnosed with breast cancer to help them through the initial treatment process, including wigs and bras, etc.

A key program is to make up and distribute the highly sought-after Pink Awareness Bags that contain information for those who have just received the news they have breast cancer, including contact information for local support groups. The bags are distributed to health and oncology centers, imaging/radiology centers and doctors' offices. They may be for adult patients, for kids whose parents have just been diagnosed or for close friends of cancer patients.

The group meets once a month to establish goals. Everyone has stories about friends or families affected by the disease and all have an overwhelming desire to help support them through treatment.

To raise funds, LBHN sponsors various fundraisers, including an April Walk in Leesburg and the Pink Raffle Auction held in several areas this month.

McGorry said one such fundraiser would be held from 1-4 p.m. Sunday at Hair Savvy and Friends at Market Station in Leesburg. The store will donate baskets of gift certificates and raffle items. With last year's proceeds, the group bought a sleeve for cancer patients suffering from lymphedema, where the lymph nodes are involved. The sleeve exerts pressure on the arm and prevents fluid draining down into the arm, with its consequent pain. McGorry said 130 tickets were sold during the Oct. 3 First Night in Leesburg.

Last year, the group made \$5,000, some of which went to bus expenses to take patients to the DC Relay for Life. Getting free mammograms for women and helping those who qualify for wigs and prostheses are among their objectives as well as providing public speakers.

The LBHN also has the help of Kara Kovach, a Girl Scout working toward her Gold Award, the highest scouting award for girls. Kara is giving out journals to all those who want to share their experience with cancer. The teenager said she hopes that women with cancer, or who've had the disease, will be comforted by documenting their stories, which will be a mix of trials, tribulations and victories. Once she has collected the journals, Kara hopes to publish a book of inspiring stories about women who have faced, fought, lived with and, most importantly, beaten cancer in Loudoun County. Those who wish to may remain anonymous.

Those who wish to know more about the network can wait a couple of weeks for the [www.lbhn.org](http://www.lbhn.org) Web site to be up and running, or contact McGorry by e-mail at [joan@lbhn.org](mailto:joan@lbhn.org).

Another Loudoun woman with a strong desire to help is Donna Troxler, owner of the On A Whim Antiques and Home D/cor store in Lucketts. Commuters passing through Lucketts are familiar with her business, with its trademark pink barn and pink silo on the east side of Rt. 15.

Every year Troxler donates a percentage of her profits each month to the National Breast Cancer Foundation. She gave more than \$1,500 from last year's sale and is planning her second annual fundraiser and sale this weekend, Oct. 18 and 19.

Troxler began giving at the same time she opened her store two-and-a-half years ago.

"Most of what I collect goes to mammograms," she said. Her connection to the disease is personal. Her daughter, a single mom in her 30s was diagnosed. She didn't have insurance, and the foundation covered the cost of surgery and treatment. Two of Troxler's dealers had double mastectomies. "If it weren't for the foundation, they wouldn't have survived this," she said.

During the fundraiser, Troxler puts up a tent and people turn up to donate. Her most popular offering are pumpkins-a truckload of which is donated by Albert Heider from his vegetable stand across the road. She paints them pink and sells them for \$10 each. The difference with the pumpkins' bright new hue is unbelievable, Troxler said, noting that they sell as fast as she can put them out. "They buy them for family members in treatment or those who have survived."

For more information, contact Troxler at [www.onawhimantiques.com](http://www.onawhimantiques.com) or call her at 703-771-4844.

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