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# Touch of Courage

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Cedar Valley Breast Cancer Task Force

## The Iowa Breast Cancer Resource Guide by Christine Carpenter

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When you are told you have breast cancer, most women have many questions and do not know where to find the answers. The Iowa Breast Cancer Resource Guide (Guide) is the perfect tool to help you find many answers and discover what resources are available to you. Just released is the newly revised 2004 edition of the Iowa Breast Cancer Resource Guide for Iowans living with breast cancer.

The 2004 Guide contains information about getting quality care; breast cancer facts including how breast cancer is diagnosed, staged and treated; Iowa hospitals approved for cancer treatment; national Cancer Centers and other care and support services available in Iowa and the entire country are described. The Guide contains information on financial and insurance matters, diet and exercise, alternative therapy and complementary medicine, breast cancer and the environment, and judging medical resources on the World Wide Web.

The Iowa Breast Cancer Resource Guide is researched, published and distributed by Iowa Breast Cancer Edu-action (IBCE). IBCE is a small but mighty group of individuals either living with breast cancer or with an interest in breast cancer advocacy. "They have accomplished a lot since IBCE President Christine Carpenter started the group in 1997," states Dee Hughes,

President of the Cedar Valley Breast Cancer Task Force.

The American Cancer Society estimates 2,400 new cases of breast cancer will be diagnosed in Iowa this year and an estimated 500 Iowans will die from the disease. IBCE has published the Guide to empower women and men to seek the best possible treatment and healing. Funding for publication and distribution came from the Des Moines Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Foundation. The Resource Guide will soon be available for downloading from the IBCE Web site: <[iowabreastcancer.org](http://iowabreastcancer.org)>.

Women's reactions to the Guide have been positive. A breast cancer survivor from Cedar Falls says "Very helpful and hopeful. Thanks." A registered nurse wrote, "We received our copy today and already gave it to a newly diagnosed woman. Thank you so much. What a wonderful gift for our patients."

If you have had a recent breast cancer diagnosis, you may request a free copy of the revised Iowa Breast Cancer Resource Guide. Send your request via fax to (319) 277-7342 or email to [sydneywikner@cfu.net](mailto:sydneywikner@cfu.net) You may also phone (319) 277-3057.

For more information regarding the Guide, contact Christine Carpenter at (319) 266-0194.

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## A Survivor's Story

by Kathy Boeckmann

Fifteen months ago I was in the busy whirl-wind of life. I had a job that kept me very busy, family life was good, my kids were growing up, I only had my son left at home and his senior year was about to begin. And then..... I had my screening yearly mammogram and life came to a snail's pace. One minute I was hurrying from this meeting to that appointment and the next thing I was waiting, waiting for answers that couldn't come fast enough for me. Looking back at the time frame it all happened in less than two weeks. At the time it seemed an eternity. I had my stereotactic breast biopsy and found out my results the next day. I had my lumpectomy 5 days later, by my choice. (I still was dedicated to my job and it's needs)

I soon realized my personal needs had to take priority. The wait for the final pathology report seemed like years. Good News - my lymph nodes were negative and my tumor was 0.8 cm at it's greatest point. Yeah! Then the wait, more time to heal, appointments with the radiation and oncologist specialist. For a brief two weeks after going back to work waiting for healing, life seemed normal again. Then radiation....once it started the realization of what I was having done to prevent a recurrence sunk in. The treatments themselves weren't bad but the daily trips in for my treatments dragged on. I never had weeks go by so slow. I wanted it over and behind me. I wanted my life back as it was before. But I know now that will never happen. I have breast cancer and I am a survivor. I know a day will not go

by that I won't think about breast cancer. I don't dwell, it's just there. The Iowa Breast Cancer Education group is wonderful group of women dedicated to their mission of finding a cure and helping other women through a very difficult time with breast cancer. They have helped me! I have learned so much from them. Most importantly, they have helped me understand breast cancer and to be strong. I have so much to learn and share with the people I come in contact with.

I want so much to help someone else get through this time a little easier if possible. I really want no one else to ever have to go through what I went through. And until there is a way to prevent breast cancer, I will work to help the women in need of comfort and strength.

## Celebration of Accomplishments

The Cedar Valley Breast Cancer Task Force held their 6<sup>th</sup> annual Celebration of Accomplishments on October 3, 2003 in the Barrett Forum on the Allen College Campus. Of the 116 people who attended the celebration, 55 were women living with breast cancer.



Donna Sheldon

The celebration started with a health fair. Experts were available to share information pertinent to

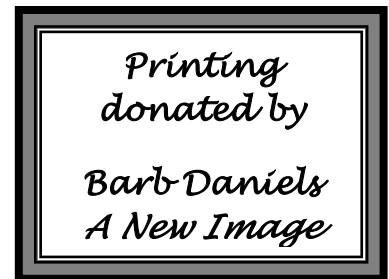
breast cancer patients. Next was a luncheon, followed by a short program. Mayor John Roof spoke about his efforts to promote breast cancer awareness in Waterloo. Donna Sheldon gave an inspirational talk about her triumphant battle with breast cancer.

Mark and Sydney Wikner were honored for their volunteer time and effort put into the distribution of the Iowa Breast Cancer Resource Guide.



Sydney and Mark Wikner

The celebration is held on alternate years between Allen Hospital and Covenant Medical Center. Next year the Celebration of Accomplishments and Luncheon will be held at Covenant Medical Center. If you would like to have your name added to the mailing list, please phone Dee Hughes at 319-235-3179.



## **Educational/Advocacy Scholarship Established** by Dee Hughes

Many people believe the way to beat breast cancer is not by early detection, but by eradicating (or ending) the disease. If we can find out what causes breast cancer, and then eliminate or correct that cause, we can then prevent new cases from occurring. Only research can bring an end to breast cancer.

We all know that research is very expensive. The National Breast Cancer Coalition has been instrumental in developing very cost effective research programs to get the greatest bang for the research buck.

Each spring, the National Breast Cancer Coalition holds their Annual Advocacy Conference and Lobby day. The conference is three days of informative sessions from the most knowledgeable breast cancer experts in the world. The fourth and last day of the conference culminates in Lobby Day.

On Lobby Day, seven hundred breast cancer advocates storm the hill to meet with the senators and representatives from each advocate's state. The advocates ask their legislators to vote in favor of specific pieces of legislation that will have a positive impact on breast cancer research and patient issues.

In 2003, only three advocates from Iowa attended the conference and lobby day. Even though they were small in number, they were mighty. The National Breast Cancer Coalition is not a group that can be ignored. Even though our lobby efforts have been effective, we are under-representing the thousands of

women in Iowa living with breast cancer.

Wouldn't it be impressive to have a large group of breast cancer advocates from Iowa going from office to office of our senators and representatives on Lobby Day? We know there are many women living with breast cancer who would love to help influence the way our government spends their research dollars. Unfortunately, some can not afford to make the trip to Washington, D.C. without help.

The Cedar Valley Breast Cancer Task Force has established a scholarship fund to assist advocates attend the National Breast Cancer Coalition Annual Advocacy Conference and Lobby Day. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to this scholarship fund, please use the form on page four. Let your voice be heard through those advocates eager to make a change.

Together, we will one day eradicate breast cancer.

## **Touch of Courage Breast Cancer Support Group**

The Support Group invites any woman or man who is dealing with breast cancer to attend the support group meetings. Spouses and significant others are also welcome. The Support Group meets the first Monday of each month (unless it is a holiday) at Covenant Cancer Treatment Center at 200 E. Ridgeway Avenue in Waterloo. The informal gatherings are at 1:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. and usually take one-and-a-half to two hours, but you are welcome to come and go as you please.

## **Breast Cancer Information Now Available in Serbo-Croatian**

Healthcare workers that found the Iowa Breast Cancer Resource Guide such a helpful tool for their patients asked Iowa Breast Cancer Education about doing a Spanish version. After some research, they found that many excellent publications were already available in Spanish, as well as many other languages, with the exception of Serbo-Croatian. With Waterloo's significant Bosnian population and many other cities in Iowa, they felt this was a need they could fulfill.

Iowa Breast Cancer Education partnered with the Black Hawk County to select a brochure and find funding for the translation and publication. The American Cancer Society booklet For Women Facing Breast Cancer was selected. Drs. Ivo Bekavac and Vinko Bogdanic proofread the translation. It was partially funded by a grant provided by the Quad Cities Affiliate Susan G. Komen Foundation.

Iowa Breast Cancer Education and the Black Hawk County health Department are providing-free of charge- ZA ZENE SUOCENE S RAKOM DOJKE (For Women Facing Breast Cancer) for Bosnian women recently diagnosed with breast cancer. If you know or want to help someone who is Bosnian and facing a diagnosis, get a copy today to learn about the basics of mammography, breast biopsies, cancer staging, treatment options, and breast reconstruction.

To get your free copy:  
Fax (319)277-7342 or,  
E-mail [sydneywikner@cfu.net](mailto:sydneywikner@cfu.net), or  
**Phone (319)277-3057.**