

\$55,000 in grants to fund local breast cancer projects

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Six nonprofit agencies that assist underserved women in Marin County received a \$55,000 boost last week when the Marin County Board of Supervisors approved a series of grants funded through the Andrea Fox Fund.

The fund was created by the Board of Supervisors to honor the spirit and memory of Andrea Fox, a beloved county employee who passed away in 2002 after battling breast cancer.

"Andrea Fox touched so many people in so many ways and these grants represent a continuation of her strength and courage," said Dr. Larry Meredith, director of the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services, in a prepared statement. "She wanted to make sure women had support and resources during their own fight with breast cancer, regardless of their ability to pay, and this Fund is taking steps to answer that call."

Fox's battle made her a local hero, as she also devoted herself as a board member of Zero Breast Cancer, a Marin-based nonprofit agency.

The funds will be used to help organizations that focus on outreach and support services around breast health, risk reduction, early detection and reduction of late-stage diagnosis and for a diagnostic funding program for women under 40 years of age. Marin County has one of the highest breast cancer rates in the nation.

Over the last four funding cycles, the fund

supported 24 projects that resulted in breast exams and mammograms, outreach, education, advocacy, translation, a yoga video, acupuncture, holistic health coaching, meals, case management and diagnostic services for women in need in Marin County.

"This is a meaningful and rewarding way for the Board to contribute to the great work that is ongoing through our community based organizations. Andrea's legacy includes reaching out to those whose access to early detection and treatment is limited," said Supervisor Susan Adams via a county staff statement.

"Those of us who loved Annie live with her loss every day, and the small comfort that we are afforded is knowing that so many projects near to her heart are being realized through the Andrea Fox Fund," added Supervisor Hal Brown.

Proposals from the community were received in February 2008 and were reviewed by a panel consisting of health care professionals and community activists.

"Annie was dedicated to encouraging the people of our community to take a proactive approach in dealing with the high incidences of breast cancer in Marin," said Marjie Bonner, Fox's mother. "She was especially concerned about those individuals who are not equipped with adequate educational materials regarding the disease and for those who don't have access to medical treatment. She would have been so honored to know that her four-year battle was

not in vain. The generosity of those who have contributed to the Andrea Fox Fund has made it possible to provide assistance to these very worthwhile programs."

The funds will assist six key programs in the county.

The Marin Center for Independent Living will use its \$10,000 in grant money to fund the salary of a bilingual advocate.

Taking Refuge, an agency that employs traditional Chinese medicinal techniques, will use the \$2,500 it will receive to continue its works. The grant will provide breast cancer patients no-cost access to the clinic. Twenty patients will receive private one-hour treatments and a health coaching session.

Meals of Marin, which prepares and delivers meals to about 2,800 women and men aged 65-70 with cancer, will apply its \$7,000 funding to a food project for women and men battling breast cancer.

Zero Breast Cancer will apply its \$4,000 grant to its Young Adult Women and Breast Cancer Prevention outreach program designed to provide preventive breast cancer education to young adult women. The grant will be used to adapt and translate the Breast Cancer and the Environment Peer Education Tool Kit into Spanish for use in ZBC's ongoing outreach program to Marin adolescents and their families. The Tool Kit curriculum introduces adolescents to breast health, breast cancer, risk reduction and early detection.

Tina Action Programs, which offer free clinical breast exams to the West Marin community, where services are scant, were also among the recipients, gaining \$4,000.

Marin General Hospital has a number of programs, and its Breast Diagnostic Center will use its \$27,500 in funding to buoy the Diagnostic Funding Program for Women Under 40. Breast Diagnostic Center of Marin screens close to 600 women under 40 annually with more than 50 percent having a medical recommendation for further studies. Funding will be specific to women under 40 years of age who are in need of financial assistance for needed diagnostic services. This program fills the gap in services for this age group, as no local, state or federal funding source currently exists to provide these services.

A letter drafted by Brown and Adams to the rest of the supervisors read, "This is the fifth year we have been able to make grants in the name of Andrea Fox, a beloved employee of Department of Public Works, and previously, Community Development Agency, who died from breast cancer in July 2002 ... Andrea was dedicated to finding a cure and wanted women who could not provide for themselves to have the support and resources they need regardless of their ability to pay. The grants the committee recommends you approve represent a spectrum of services that Andrea would have been proud to support."