

BULLETIN

## Run for the Cure: HSA members crucial in diagnosis, care of breast cancer patients

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by MAUREEN ROSS

Where were you on Sunday, October 4? I was in Kelowna, at the BC Breast Cancer Foundations Run for the Cure, and much to my surprise, I was running.

For the last two years HSA has been a sponsor of the Run for the Cure. In 1997 our convention passed a resolution to become a sponsor and donate \$20,000 to the BC Breast Cancer Foundation, while retaining control over the projects that were funded by this money. At the 1998 convention we voted to continue participation, and a group of us decided to plunge into the wonderful world of fundraising. A working group was formed of eager volunteers including myself, Cheryl Greenhalgh (Region 3 Director), Pam Bush (HSA staff researcher), Maureen Whelan (HSA Executive Director ... Operations) and Lyn Hauzeneder (assistant chief steward at Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops).

A lively discussion at the Board of Directors led to the conclusion that if we could increase our membership participation, we could increase the funds raised. A brochure was printed, banners were designed, and there were prizes offered to HSA participants.

I am sure many of you are wondering why HSA chose to support the BC Breast Cancer Foundation. The reasons become more obvious if you think about the fact that 85 per cent of our members are women. One in nine women is diagnosed with breast cancer, and breast cancer also strikes two per cent of men.

Often it is HSA mammographers who make the first diagnosis; it is sonographers who assist with the biopsy that goes to the cytotechnologist who reads the slide. After the diagnosis it is HSA radiation therapists and pharmacists who plan radiation and chemotherapy treatment, HSA physiotherapists and occupational therapists who aid in the physical recovery of the patient, and HSA social workers and psychologists who counsel the patients. I have no doubt left out many of our membership who are also involved and I apologize, but you get the picture.

I also want to point out that the Run for the Cure is the most successful fundraising event in Canada. Our sponsorship gives HSA an opportunity to raise the profile of our union and the work our members do.

About the time we were working on the plan for the campaign I received a flyer for a "learn to run" class in time for October 4. What a good idea, I thought; if my union can make a commitment, so can I. I signed up

myself and my co-worker, Shirl Kavaloff. The first night of training it was 40°C in Kelowna, I was 52 years old, and more than 40 pounds overweight. I hadn't run in 10 years. By the end of the evening I thought I had probably made a big mistake! I actually thought it might kill me. It was several weeks into the training course before I even imagined that I might be able to run 50 per cent of the five kilometres by October 4. By week six I was feeling hopeful and on October 4 I was able to run the whole five kilometres.

For me the first five minutes of any running is horrid and I am not sure I will ever really enjoy it ... but I feel that this year I gave more than just the dollars for the cause.

Many of my co-workers, who had not previously been involved, participated on our team. Leeanne Dapavo ... a special technologist in diagnostic imaging at Kelowna General ... raised over \$2,000, and won a two-year lease on a new car. Leeanne had a personal reason for her involvement: her sister was diagnosed with breast cancer earlier this year. My neighbour, Angie Ross, who lost a sister at 28, walked this year and I think it is just the beginning of her involvement.

Twice in my lifetime breast cancer dramatically altered my life. When I was 22 my mother died of breast cancer, and when I was 28 my six stepchildren's mother died. Many of you have or will have similar or worse experiences.

So I plan to keep running. I like what it does for me.

Next year on the first Sunday in October, I will be in the Run for the Cure. Where will you be?

*Maureen Ross represents Region 8 on HSAs Board of Directors.*

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