

# A CARING MILESTONE

Breast cancer group celebrates 25 years of service

STAFF REPORT



The Breast Cancer Assistance Group of Monterey County is marking a milestone—25 years of serving women with breast cancer.

BCAG was launched on April 6, 1997 by four women with breast cancer who felt that enhanced support was needed for those battling the disease. Working with Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, their vision and fundraising not only helped establish BCAG, it also contributed to development of what is now the Carol Hatton Breast Care Center as well as the breast cancer support group and patient navigator program.

Every year, nearly 240 women in Monterey County are diagnosed with breast cancer. BCAG helps approximately one-third of these women annually. Over the years BCAG has helped hundreds more who experienced financial difficulties as a result of a breast cancer diagnosis and treatment. Breast Cancer Assistance Grants help cover basic living expenses such as housing, gas, utilities, food and childcare during treatment and recovery. BCAG does not assist with medical costs.

Today, BCAG's 10-member volunteer board—all breast cancer survivors—are impacting the lives of people with breast cancer throughout Monterey County. Money raised through year-long fundraising and grant writing goes to provide assistance grants

to eligible women in Monterey County or those who live in San Benito or Santa Cruz counties and are being treated by a physician in Monterey County.

The Breast Cancer Assistance Group works closely with and receives patient referrals from Community Hospital, Natividad Medical Center in Salinas, and Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital, as well as oncology practices throughout the county.

"Our organization has evolved over the years to ensure that we are addressing the most pressing needs of women with breast cancer," says Mary Surbridge, BCAG's longest serving active board member and the organization's corresponding secretary.

"We are extremely grateful to businesses, individuals and other nonprofit organizations for their support with fundraising, donations and invaluable partnerships. The Monterey Peninsula Foundation provides us with an annual grant to cover basic operating expenses, so that our fundraising and other grant dollars go directly to providing Breast Cancer Assistance Grants. As breast cancer survivors, our board members appreciate the support of our community, making the help we provide possible. It truly changes lives." ■

More information is available at [bcagmc.org](http://bcagmc.org)