

## HERS Breast Cancer Foundation

May 2017 Newsletter

# HERS: Hope, Empowerment, Renewal, Support

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As we shared last month, the annual People with Purpose event was a huge success. Even though we are busy with other projects and running the program stores, we are still running on the energy and inspiration generated by our community that night. We wanted to share it with you. Please enjoy (and feel free to share) [these videos](#) from the event. Many thanks to Alforde M. Joaquin at Get Sports Focus.



Vera Packard, HERS Executive Director

[Photo album](#), many thanks to Ramil Sumalpong of Iconic Lab.

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## Walk/Run 2017: **Discounted Registration!**

HERS Annual Walk/Run will be held September 30, 2017.

From now to June 30, you can register two participants for \$80. Full price adult registration is normally \$50. Bring a friend, sign up early, and save some money!

[Register here.](#)



Festivities start at 8am on Saturday, September 30 at Quarry Lakes Regional Park in Fremont. 5K Walk, 5K/10K Run. Opening Ceremony, Community Expo, and Lunch. [More information here.](#)

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## Hair With Care: A HERS Program



Hair with Care, our newest program at HERS Breast Cancer Foundation, was established in 2011.

Women beginning or ending their chemo treatment can seek comfort in the program and regain confidence they may have lost as their hair thinned during treatment.

Hair with Care provides women of all ages the opportunity to meet with a certified cosmetologist in a supportive, caring, and

understanding environment, where their needs and concerns come first. Helping women feel empowered and beautiful again is what the program strives for and delivers to each customer. One of our cosmetologists, [Jenna Suffle](#), is profiled in this newsletter.

The Hair With Care program has served approximately 70 clients per

year for the last few years, and is on pace to serve 80 clients in 2017. If you or someone you know is in need of these services, please don't hesitate to contact HERS with your questions or to set up a free consultation.

Losing one's hair can be one of the most emotionally challenging parts of cancer treatment. Hair with Care cosmetologists are available to help find the perfect wig for everyday use or a special event. They also style the wig and assist in fitting and adjusting it for comfort. When cancer survivors must face the "mercy of the mirror" during and after their treatments, we help make this a supportive and empowering process. Cosmetologists listen to each woman's story and lend a shoulder to cry on when the stress of restoring her appearance seems overwhelming.



Most insurance providers do not cover the cost of these products. Because we have grant and financial support from our program stores to fund this program, we can provide these products at no cost to the uninsured or low income (e.g., Medi-Cal) client. Discounts are available to those paying out of pocket.

**Hair with Care services are available at the Fremont program store (Washington Hospital Women's Center in the Washington West building). The store is open Monday-Friday, 10am-5pm and by appointment one Saturday per month. Please [check our website](#) or call 510-790-1911 for more information.**

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## Jenna Suffle, Caring Cosmetologist

*Jenna has worked in the Hair with Care program at the Fremont store since 2011. She shared her experience working at HERS:*

Harriet Despeaux, a dear friend and wonderful HERS supporter, introduced me to Vera. I owe a big thank you to both of these women for creating a beautiful space to fit wigs and help people. I am proud to be part of the HERS journey.



I give a custom wig experience to patients and non-medical clients, helping them get the right fit, style and correct hair color to flatter their skin tone. Once we find a great combination for them I order from the manufacturer and schedule them to come back at a later date for a refit. If we find something that happens to fit and we have it in stock, we send them home that day with their new hair. Otherwise, at the refit appointment we make sure it is perfect for them and we move ahead to the final step.

The final step is organizing their paperwork. We collect their prescription from them or their doctor and check their insurance coverage. We do our best to take care of all the billing so they can go home with their wig and not worry about the financial end of it.

If their insurance does not cover wigs, we assess if they're eligible for our grant program (to cover the full cost) or we give a discount and no tax for people who need to pay out of pocket. The wigs range from \$165 to \$365, and we offer a range of styles from Dream USA, Henry Margu, and Jon Renau.

When all these steps are complete, clients are all set to head home with their new hair. It is great to see their happiness and sense of wholeness once we find the right fit. I notice their feelings of stress and insecurity lighten almost immediately.

Helping clients at HERS is very comfortable and comes easy. Working as a stylist in salons trained me to understand what clients want. Seeing patients go through their treatments is tough, but staying strong for them during the appointment is really what they need during a time like this.

Patients are so grateful to have help with their appearance. All they want is to feel normal again and not be noticed as a "sick" person. Finding the right hair brings a sense of normalcy to their lives and helps them heal. I am happy that the help I provide brings them so much joy. Three close family members survived breast cancer at all different stages – I know it is a frightening disease.

Potential clients are always curious about the process and whether or not their insurance will cover the wig. We encourage people to just go ahead and make an appointment. We offer a complimentary one-hour

consultation, one on one in a private setting. We can help guide them with everything from finding the right wig to insurance and payment options. The last thing they should be worried about is what they will owe. They should also know that there is no pressure, they can come back for another consultation if needed.

Helping people feel like themselves again and seeing their big smile at the end is the best part of my job!

I am 32 years old and a Fremont native. I have been in the hair industry for 15 years and have been fitting wigs for 6 years now. I am married to a wonderful, supportive husband and we have a beautiful son named Mateo who is the light of our lives. As you can imagine, a lot of our hobbies center around rest and relaxation while raising our toddler. We love to travel and be outdoors. On the weekends you can find us out for a walk or hanging out with family.

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## Michelle Mahar, Awesome Admin

*Michelle is the Executive Administrative Assistant for HERS. She has worked in the Fremont site for two years. She kindly took the time to share a little about herself and her work at HERS:*



My everyday job is doing the patient billing, paying the vendors, working on insurance processes, and helping the patients whenever I can.

My favorite thing is working with patients. I always wanted to go into the medical field – you could say it's in my blood. I started out training to be a firefighter/paramedic

and was top female in my class. My whole family – dad, uncle, cousins and aunt are firefighters – but I soon realized that I loved the medical side more than firefighting. I went to Ohlone and started my nursing pre-regs, but didn't finish due to the birth of my daughter. I went on to obtain my certifications in phlebotomy and medical billing.

Working with patients and fellow staff, I've grown into a more compassionate and understanding person. I know I have a lot left to learn here at HERS. I want to help the foundation grow into a larger organization that serves more people. I see myself standing alongside the great women I work with and striving forward with our mission to reach more Bay Area communities.

It's been a journey to get where we are as a team. We've shared so many laughs, tears, hugs and high fives that I can't even think of just one story. It's important to learn to work with each other and adapt to

different personalities. It will make you a stronger person and an asset to any team.



*Did you notice the beautiful table decorations at PWP?  
Just one of Michelle's many talents at work.*

I started my journey helping to fight breast cancer about 15 years ago when I worked for the American Cancer Society. I was the Assistant to the Director of East Bay Operations and had a great deal of responsibility. I helped with a lot of different breast cancer events for them and loved every minute of it. Many friends and family members have either had breast cancer scares (including my mother) or treatment, so I've been inspired to help in any way I can. I heard about the position at HERS and jumped at the chance; I figured it was a more direct route to helping.

I'm 40 years old, born and raised in Fremont – I've lived there my whole life. I've been with my loving man, Taylor, for 20 years and he is my rock. I have two great children: my 19 year old daughter Autumn is finishing her freshman year at University of Nevada Reno and my 14 year old son Logan is starting high school in the fall. I have a crazy dog Sammy and two crazy cats, Ellis and Alice who are all part of the family.

My hobbies are spending time with my family and great friends, reading, hiking, going on adventures, spending time at the beach, and painting. I love to coach youth in cheer and want to get back to it. I also am very active in my children's sports teams. I love being a mom!

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## **Do You Know a Person with Purpose?**

If you are a HERS client and would like to share your experience, or any story about how a "person

with purpose" helped you in your breast cancer journey, please send it in email to HERS Executive Director, [Vera Packard](#).

We may share these stories on social media or in this newsletter (with your express permission, of course). We'll be collecting them all year long in preparation for PWP 2018. We welcome submissions from anyone in our community who would like to let us know about people with purpose.



Photo credit: Ramil Sumalpong, Iconic Lab

Please include your name and indicate if you want to share your story anonymously, using first names only, or with full attribution.

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## HERS Breast Cancer Foundation

### **Program Stores:**

Fremont \* Stanford \* Pleasanton

(510) 790-1911

[hersinfo@hersbreastcancerfoundation.org](mailto:hersinfo@hersbreastcancerfoundation.org)

Click [here](#) to visit our website

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