

Mission

Firefly Sisterhood's mission is to foster one-to-one connections between women recently diagnosed with breast cancer and inspirational survivors so that no woman has to go through breast cancer alone. These connections are personal and local. As greater understanding of the psychosocial aspects of breast cancer emerges, medical research acknowledges that "Helping a woman deal with the shocks of diagnosis and treatment is more than a matter of filling gaps in her knowledge...Access to the experiences and support of others is also crucial" (Hawkins et al., 2010, p48). Firefly's primary focus on making these one-to-one connections is extremely powerful and has proven vital for all women involved.

Current Programs, Service Statistics, and Accomplishments

The one-to-one mentoring match is the core of our program. Since May 2014, we have made over 600 matches in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, 1/3 of those are in the east metro and western Wisconsin. We currently have 200 trained peer mentors (Guides), to serve all of our requests. Our program is free and available to all women with breast cancer in the 16-county Twin Cities metro area, including western Wisconsin.

Project Description

Firefly Sisterhood respectfully requests a grant to expand outreach and recruitment of Guides in the east metro and St. Croix Valley. Our Program Manager will develop and maintain relationships with St. Croix Valley healthcare providers, recruit and train Guides, and coordinate matches. We already partner with several providers in the St. Croix Valley. Funding from this grant will increase our capacity to build strong referral relationships and will make possible up to 50 new matches per year in the St. Croix Valley Foundation's focus area.

Objectives

- Provide psychosocial support through a personal one-to-one connection for 50 more recently diagnosed women per year in the St. Croix Valley.
- Recruit and train 10 additional Guides who live in the area.
- Expand relationships with providers in the east metro and western Wisconsin.
- Hold in-person meetings with all oncology clinics, breast cancer treatment centers, and integrative health organizations in the St. Croix Valley.

We currently partner with Regions Hospital and United Breast Center in Saint Paul, as well as the Cancer Center of Western Wisconsin in New Richmond, Wisconsin and their network of hospitals in the St. Croix Valley.

Need and Impact

According to a recent survey by the HealthPartners system, they are predicting a growth of at least 25% in the St. Croix Valley in breast cancer diagnosis and outpatient demand. South Washington County in Minnesota has one of the highest rates of breast cancer incidence, 139-154 women per 100,000 will be diagnosed with breast cancer. * *Cancer Facts 2015*

In a recent Cancer Journal article from Jan. 2016, women who were socially isolated had higher rates of recurrence and mortality from their breast cancer.

Person-centered care such as emotional support, access to resources, and holistic approaches contribute to an individual's healing process when confronted with a medical crisis (Gordon, 1996). Johnson et al (2014) demonstrate that non-traditional therapy sessions provided by a nonprofit organization improved patients' perceptions of quality of life and led to more active involvement in the healing process.

Our holistic approach takes into account the wellbeing of the patient, not just the diagnosis. We emphasize the psychosocial areas of social support, identity, and emotional outcomes for the Guides as well as the Sisters. Firefly Sisterhood aims to improve the quality of life for all women with breast cancer and looks forward to a world where no one faces breast cancer alone.