

# SURVIVOR'S VOICE

Here's another powerful example of how your gifts are helping breast cancer patients.

## Breast cancer, when did those words enter your life?

In early 2003, through a fluke, I was diagnosed with non-invasive DCIS and had a lumpectomy involving my left breast. The experience, despite having medical insurance at that time, was handled badly on many levels.

In late 2009 I was diagnosed with both non-invasive DCIS and early stage invasive breast cancer, again in my left breast; one lymph node was suspicious, biopsied, and found to be cancerous.

During the diagnostic process for breast cancer (MRIs, CT scans, 8-minute mammograms, etc.), very unexpectedly, unrelated lung cancer was found in my right lung and was first misdiagnosed as 'an infection', then diagnosed correctly through a biopsy as BAC (Bronchioloalveolar carcinoma, an uncommon form of lung cancer).

## How did you hear about the Help Now Fund through The Breast Cancer Charities of America?

Cora Legg, a social worker at the Cancer Center of Santa Barbara, worked with me, finding available organizations and charities for support. I was unable to work, did not have medical insurance, house, spouse, or retirement. Cora was a miracle during this time of chaos.

## What was your first reaction when you heard you were chosen to receive this help?

Relief and gratitude. The funds from The Breast Cancer Charities of America helped with a month's rent on my small apartment, allowing me to keep a roof over my head for another month.

## What was your biggest burden during treatments?

During the process of diagnosis/surgery/treatments for breast cancer, then lung cancer, I lost income, lover, the ability to work... and the ability to think clearly. There was no 'biggest' burden. Initially, it all simply sucked. The surprises just kept coming.

## How have you stayed mentally and physically healthy? (support groups, exercises, diets, family, friends, doctors/nurses, ect)

I did my homework and found what worked best for my body, mind, and spirit. I used the AMA and also worked with a remarkable acupuncturist/herbalist, a skilled naturopath, drank organic vegetable juice three times daily, walked daily when able to, changed my diet, my relationships, my expectations, kept in close contact with an amazing spiritual mentor, Meredith Young-Sowers, and enrolled in her 'Women Moving Through Breast Cancer' program. These individuals and changes facilitated my healing journey with cancer.

## What brought the most joy or fun to your life while going through treatment?

First and foremost my connections with my sister, Janny, with my dear friend, Julia—and with those who love me. Second, and significantly, Netflix, reading, and raw, organic chocolate.

## What has been your happiest moment since after you were diagnosed?

There have been many. The shift in awareness from confusion to compassion and connection didn't happen in one moment. I now experience joy and sadness as flip sides of the same coin. I honor both, but focus on joy.



Sukey Kielman Briggs, age: 62 of Goleta, CA  
embracing the joy of life!