

Activist: Lets focus on cancer causes

Prevention, rather than treatment, should be focus of research

By Simon Read, STAFF WRITER

Inside Bay Area

DANVILLE — Its time to focus more attention on the environmental causes of breast cancer and other terminal diseases, a 15-year breast cancer survivor and activist said Tuesday.

Marilyn Burch, president and founder of the Wall of Hope Breast Cancer Survivors Project, said air pollution and the use of chemicals and pesticides in food are overlooked causes.

Theres always been a heavy focus on the treatment of breast cancer and other forms of the disease, but not enough focus on the cause and prevention, Burch said. We distract ourselves by focusing on designer drugs, but were not putting the emphasis on the root causes.

Those causes will be brought to the publics attention on Saturday, when the Wall of Hope is exhibited at Blackhawk Plaza, 3480 Blackhawk Plaza Circle. The wall can be viewed from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Measuring 100 feet in length, the wall features 750 photos of cancer survivors from throughout California — including the Tri-Valley area.

Burch began the project 11 years ago, taking portraits of breast-cancer survivors in Sacramento, she said. From there, she expanded the project throughout the state.

As I went about collecting these portraits, I had conversations with a lot of survivors from California and other states, Burch said. A lot of them are concerned with how they got the cancer in the first place and how to get rid of it.

Burch said run-off from pesticides and toxic emissions from factories and cars are causes of cancer that most people fail to take seriously.

Its a global environmental problem, she said. Were poisoning all forms of life. If we dont start doing something about it, were not going to be able to stop or cure anything.