

Wall of Hope comes to Blackhawk

Project aims to help cancer survivors live and thrive

By Paul Bugarino, STAFF WRITER
Inside Bay Area

DANVILLE — Walls support buildings and keep out predators, but a group hoping to help those afflicted with cancer Saturday showed a new purpose for walls — to provide hope.

The Wall of Hope Breast Cancer Survivors' Project brought half of the California Wall of Hope to Blackhawk, along with information and facts about breast cancer.

"It feels really good to see a display like this, that gives us all hope, women and men," said Mary Curtin of San Ramon. "Our society places a large emphasis on breasts, and to see that having breast cancer doesn't take away the femininity of these women is beautiful.

"A short time ago you wouldn't have seen so many women surviving from breast cancer, she added.

Saturday's display measures 100 feet long and features 750 photos of cancer survivors from throughout Northern California, including the Tri-Valley area.

Carol Nothorn of Blackhawk, a breast cancer survivor, stopped by to observe the wall.

People always ask me, Are things getting back to normal? but I think life is a series of transitions, so I had to face the cancer head on and not let it get me down, Nothorn said. I felt that the way I handled things while going through therapy was important so that I could be an example for others.

Marilyn Burch, president and founder of the Wall of Hope Breast Cancer Survivors Project and a 15-year breast cancer survivor, spoke to visitors of the wall to help them deal with their cancer experiences.

People have mixed emotions in how they deal with cancer, Burch said. Some people feel happy or relieved, while others still grieve and are upset when seeing the wall; regardless, we are there for them.

Women should constantly keep (atop) of what's going on in breast cancer research, Nothorn said.

The key is to give help to the survivors and see their vantage point on this disease and help them find answers, Burch said.

The wall is part of a mall-wide tribute to breast cancer survivors, featuring a gift with purchase promotion. Shoppers who spend \$300 total at the plaza during the month of October receive a free silver Awareness Watch engraved with a pink ribbon and pink leather straps.

The group hopes to continue to spread the message of hope by constructing a national wall that would span a mile and list 37,500 names. Burch said she hopes the wall, named the Mile of Survival, would one day be displayed in Washington D.C.

October is national Breast Cancer Survivors Month. For more information on The Wall of Hope, call (925) 736-7100 or visit <http://www.wallofhope.org>.