

FROM GRASSROOTS TO INCREDIBLE SUCCESS, ALL FOR A CAUSE
Volunteer Women Surpass the \$1,000,000 Mark in Cancer-Related Donations

Group To Be Featured on CBC's 'Dragon's Den' December 8th and in International Cookbook Publication

On the heels of surpassing the \$1,000,000 mark in donations, Breast Friends has moved to the national and international stage, and the authors/publishers of this Foam Lake, Saskatchewan cookbook are as surprised as anyone, "We're amazed at the response from people. We certainly could not have fathomed the wonderful support for this project," says Cecile Halyk, one of ten hands-on members of the non-profit's Board of Directors.

It was tragedy that brought this group of self-described "seasoned" women together to begin their journey. Their first two cookbooks, "For the Breasts of Friends" and "For the Breasts and the Rest of Friends", were dedicated to family and friends taken by the disease, but it was the third book, "Breast Wishes" that changed the way they think. "We realized that it was time to focus on cancer survivors and their success stories," adds Halyk.

While success for Breast Friends may have come as a surprise, it makes sense that people have responded the way they have. "This disease touches every family across the country and around the world," says Patti Hack, Director. "We never imagined opportunities like Dragon's Den and we are delighted. On the advice of our printer we entered an international cookbook contest in Paris, France through the Gourmand Magazine. After reviewing our story they decided to do a feature on us. The success of these books amazes everyone – we often say it is like they have a life of their own."

For Breast Friends, the momentum comes from the enthusiasm spurred on by grassroots support. The project has become more demanding than anything the group ever anticipated. "We got together recently to look to the future of our organization," explained Hack. "Things had changed. We were feeling a little overwhelmed with the hard work and drudgery required to meet demand for our cookbooks." For Breast Friends, the two-day strategy session was about re-establishing their purpose and direction. "We recognize that the day to day tasks of hauling, and packaging cookbooks, invoicing and contacting vendors, will always be part of the process but our impetus comes from staying involved and listening to folks that work directly with, or have been affected by this disease."

Group members spend many hours travelling, speaking at functions and conferences, and listening to cancer stories. Every day the group receives emails from people touched by the disease who are interested in the project. It's these stories that help the group determine where the greatest need for funding is, and where to focus the group's energy. Some of these stories are highlighted in the group's latest cookbook, "Breast Wishes for Christmas".

"We are approachable and we're good listeners," explains Breast Friends Director Jeannie Johnson. If we can help, we'll do whatever we can." In addition to donating to major cancer foundations, Breast Friends ideas have helped to facilitate partnerships with community agencies and programs. Some of the campaigns include:

- Diagnostic and treatment equipment for community hospitals and health centers
- "Cancer de Mama" program – initiative to provide breast cancer patients in impoverished Mexican communities with prosthesis. Bras were also donated at an event in Saskatchewan that featured the "Menopausal Women's Air Band", comprised of Breasts Friends Directors, of course
- Early detection education kits and integrated cancer care education

Everything about this group is grassroots, even the product. According to Breast Director Cecile Halyk, "Besides Breasts Friends' original recipes, some winners are gleaned from friends and family. Other treasured recipes have been passed down through the generations. It's a real group effort." While Halyk is astounded and thrilled at the success, in retrospect she sees it more clearly. "These are more than practical cookbooks. They are beautiful collections which also include heart warming stories, quotes, and original photos, but primarily they are vehicles for a great cause."

As far as the future goes, Breasts Friends will keep going for the time being. "We still love the project and the collegiality," says Patti Hack. "With the changes going on in our lives we can't be sure what will transpire. We do know that in the past, when we've had a lull, something wonderful happens that re-energizes us."



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Breast of Friends is a non-profit cookbook publisher dedicated to funding worthwhile cancer-related causes. Founded by 10 women from Foam Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada, the group continues to donate dollars to community-based initiatives that make a difference in the lives of people stricken by cancer.
www.breastfriends.ca

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