



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

To: Editor, General News/Medical/Supplement

May – Breast Cancer Survivorship Month

Celebrate, Appreciate, Requite

(HONG KONG - 16 May 2013) The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation (HKBCF) today announced the formal dedication of the month of May each year as “Breast Cancer Survivorship Month” to recognize and celebrate the determination, care and mutual support among breast cancer survivors and their families and friends. The HKBCF also hopes to raise public awareness of breast health and the importance of positivity and optimism in the support of breast cancer survivors. Breast cancer is the number one cancer faced by the female population with more than 3,000 newly diagnosed cases every year. It does not only affect those with a family history but also those without – over 90% of women diagnosed with breast cancer do not have a hereditary issue in this regard.

Cultivate Survivorship by Celebrating, Appreciating and Requiring to manage the fear of breast cancer

Mrs. Eliza Fok, Chairman of the HKBCF and a 10-year survivor, said, “The moment an individual is diagnosed with breast cancer she becomes a breast cancer survivor and embarks on the new, long and tortuous life journey wrought with tremendous fear of relapse.”

Mrs. Fok emphasized, “In the face of such grave fear, we survivors focus on cultivating positive spirits and celebrate life while we can, appreciating our loved ones and every event taking place around us as well as doing our best to requite to the community which lends us support. The establishment of the HKBCF is a shining example of our attempt to give back and contribute. HKBCF’s Support Service is unique with peers (survivors) ‘mentoring’ those newly diagnosed with breast cancer and the facilitation of sharing and guidance by fellow survivors and their family members and professional caretakers in the pursuit of holistic wellbeing. So far, nearly 2500 survivors have benefitted from this service.” Mrs. Fok also took the opportunity to express appreciation to the families and friends who stand by breast cancer survivors. It is with the constant support of loved ones that breast cancer survivors learn to cope with and manage the new life challenges ahead of them.

Lifelong self care is at the core of Survivorship

Successful entrepreneur and the pillar of her loving family Ms. Mary Hemrajani, Vice-Chairman of the HKBCF and a 7-year survivor, said, “Survivorship goes hand-in-hand with lifelong care for ourselves. If we can access more relevant information, we shall be better able to lead more positive lives thereafter.”

Mrs. Hemrajani pointed out that for survivors who return to work, they need support as they adjust to their altered psychological and physical states as well as daily routines. For some women this may mean that they are more prone to developing lymphoedema; or some may find themselves suffering from fatigue more easily after chemotherapy while others still may live in fear and anxiety about the chances of relapse and other physical problems. The HKBCF organizes a number of support services to specifically address these needs and concerns. The “Sunflower Group” facilitates breast cancer survivors to share and exchange information and experiences with each other and empowers them through peer encouragement.

Tolerance and time are the best encouragement

During today’s media gathering, a survivor couple also shared their personal journey of fighting breast cancer. Mr. Lee is the husband of a 3-year breast cancer survivor. The couple now volunteers at the HKBCF’s Family Support Group, sharing their story with the family members of newly diagnosed breast cancer survivors – showcasing the remarkable spirit of requiring the support they have enjoyed. When Mr. Lee found out his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer, he became distraught and depressed. But he quickly realized he needed to be the source of support for his wife so he accepted the diagnosis and readied himself to face the challenge, supporting his wife every step of the way. He expressed, “Sometimes family members are anxious about the disease. This makes the patients also anxious, which is not good for them. A little comfort can go a long way - patting their hands, accepting their sometimes volatile emotions can be the greatest support to breast cancer patients.”

Mr. Lee also calls on husbands to spend more time standing shoulder to shoulder with their wives if the latter are diagnosed with breast cancer. He said, “There is no need for embarrassment even if we need to support them with hygiene tasks. Just think about how your wives take care of you and support you in your daily lives. Of course we owe it to them to fight the disease together on the journey of breast cancer survivorship.”



To launch the **Breast Cancer Survivorship Month**, HKBCF is presenting two major events:

1. The **Pink Ribbon Concert** tonight featuring **Korean pianist Ms. Suh Hai-Kyung**, a breast cancer survivor, **HKBCF's "Melody in Mind"**, a choir formed by breast cancer survivors in Hong Kong, the **Korea Breast Cancer Survivors' Choir** and the **Korean Women's Association of Hong Kong Choir** (**Mrs. Rita Fan, Hon President of HKBCF**, will address the audience.)
2. **Brighten up Your Life 2013 (Day Camp)**
Date: 26 May 2013 (Sunday)
Target: Breast cancer patients and survivors
Theme: Care for Self
Content: Singing, talks, trial of dance therapy, art therapy and reflexology

* * *

Notes to Editors:

About Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation

The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation (HKBCF) was founded on 8 March 2005. The HKBCF's team of psychologists, medical professionals, social workers and breast cancer survivors is dedicated to addressing breast cancer patients and their families' concerns with empathy, professional expertise and experiences. Over the years, HKBCF has developed multiple services to fight against breast cancer, such as the set-up of the "Breast Health Centre" in May 2011, funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, to provide quality breast screening services to over 10,000 women and carry out the mission of "early detection".

HKBCF offers a comprehensive Support Service to provide physical, emotional and spiritual support to breast cancer survivors and their families during their survivorship journey, including **Emotional Support Services**: Peer and Family Support Group, Individual Counseling Service and Monthly Survivors' Group (Sunflower Group); **Lymphoedema Care Services**: Measurement of Lymphoedema Index, Preventive Lymphatic Massage and Exercise Class (Monthly) and Lymphatic Management Support Group; **Drug Financial Assistance** and **Free Wig Programme**; various **Interest classes**. Patients can get support and encouragement and are motivated to be positive and energetic to face life again.

Photo captions:

(1)



The Hong Kong Breast Cancer Foundation (HKBCF) announced the formal dedication of the month of May each year as “Breast Cancer Survivorship Month”.

(2)



Mrs. Eliza Fok, Chairman of the HKBCF encouraged the survivors to conquer their fear and live their lives in a positive way by celebrating, appreciating and requiting.

(3)



Dr. Peter H.K. Choi shared that annually there are more than 3,000 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in HK and over 90% of women diagnosed with breast cancer do not have a hereditary issue in this regard.

(4)



Mr. & Mrs. Lee shared their personal journey of fighting breast cancer and volunteer at the HKBCF's family support group.