

WalkwithLOVE

Dr. Susan Love Takes Steps to Eradicate Breast Cancer

By SIERRA SHAFER
Staff Writer

A pioneer in many respects, **Dr. Susan Love** has been called the founding mother of the breast cancer advocacy movement and wields more than 20 years of direct patient care and more than a decade of dedicated breast cancer research. Her groundbreaking book “Dr. Susan Love’s Breast Book,” first published in 1990 and now in its 5th edition, offered women a complete guide to breast cancer diagnosis and treatment at a time when the go-to therapy was mastectomy.

But the renowned breast cancer specialist and surgeon has little interest in finding a *cure* for cancer. Instead, Love is hustling to find the cause and has every intention of eradicating the disease during her lifetime.

“If you don’t set a lofty goal, you won’t do anything lofty,” Love said. “We can find a cure, but wouldn’t it be better if we found the cause and prevented anyone from getting cancer in the first place?”

When the breast cancer advocacy movement started, Love said a cancer diagnosis was hush-hush – a dirty word. At the time the push was to generate awareness to make sure women got treatment.

“We branded it with pink because we wanted it to be less scary. When the NFL is wearing pink, I think it’s clear we have created the awareness. But awareness is not enough. We have to find the cause. We are ready for real action,” Love said.

WALK WITH LOVE

On May 18, Love will be joined by a family of supporters in the seventh annual **Walk With Love** event at the **Palisades Recreation Center**.

Every May, since 2008, Love has walked the five-kilometer course through her hometown of Pacific Palisades to raise support for cutting-edge breast cancer research.

Last year more than 800 supporters joined together to raise a record-breaking \$199,000 – of which 100 percent went directly into research.

While Love has been a long-time proponent for innovative breast cancer research, a change in her own health has made her even more impatient for answers.

In 2012, she was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia. With no obvious symptoms,

Love learned of her disease only after a routine checkup and blood work.

“I think I’m more impatient now and in more of a hurry,” she said. “I’ve been reminded that you don’t know how long you have. You only know about the moment. There are women being diagnosed every day. We have to get rid of this disease and there is no reason we can’t do it.”

After Love got the life-changing phone call that all too many people are familiar with, her life took a drastic turn from doctor to patient and the sharp change was eye opening.

Even after being admitted to the hospital and undergoing chemotherapy, her blood counts did not respond positively to the treatment. An arduous seven-week hospital stay followed and Love underwent a full bone-marrow transplant donated by her younger sister.

“To put it lightly, it was a bad six months,” Love said. “But I learned firsthand that the treatments we have for cancer have long-lasting consequences. We don’t talk about the cost of the cure – not just financially, but the cost of side effects like early-onset menopause, chemo brain or neuropathy. Because of my experience going through cancer treatments, I’m even more determined to find the cause.

“We cover breast cancer in a celebratory cloud of pink and focus on hope and call people survivors because of course it’s nice not to die,” she added. “Treating cancer is fine, but it would be better not to get it in the first place.”

While the cancer treatments have their high cost, there is certainly an exorbitant price on finding the cause – and an urgency to see it paid.

“The more money we have right now, the more research we can do right now. It’s very frustrating when I’m ready to go with a new idea for a novel program, but I’m still waiting to hear if we have the funding,” Love said. “This money is critically important. I have an idea a minute, and I’m in a hurry.”

FOCUSING ON PREVENTION

Love has spent her entire career working in the field of breast cancer yet still sees a lot of the same treatments – with about the same results – as when she started 30 years ago.

“We are still taking out normal body parts. I liken it to the way doctors 40 years ago rou-

tinely recommended a hysterectomy if a woman had an irregular Pap smear,” Love said. “That seems so extreme to us now, but essentially that is how we are treating breast cancer. There’s no reason why we can’t prevent cancer, but if we keep doing the same research on the same things, we’re going to get the same results.”

The key, she said, is to get more creative and collaborate with other researchers. Among their many efforts, the **Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation** is currently working with **St. John’s Health Center** to look into possible bacterial or viral causes of cancer and is partnering with researchers in New Jersey to better map out breast anatomy, which Love said is still largely unknown.

“For all we understand about breast cancer, we still don’t know the anatomy of the breast because it’s so unique,” she said. “It’s the only organ we’re not born with and there are so many changes it goes through. Humans are also one of the only mammals that get breast cancer. We have focused so much on the cancer – not enough on the organ.”

According to Love, many of the big research institutions get focused on what they can do academically to get promoted and make tenure. They shy away from the higher risk research because they are afraid to fail.

“We aren’t afraid to fail,” she said of the Foundation. “We are willing to try anything that will help. I’m frustrated with most of breast cancer research. It doesn’t seem to be addressing out-of-the-box thinking. If we’re going to change, if we’re going to find the answer, it won’t be simple. (Continued on page 14)



All photos by Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer



Palisadian Dr. Susan Love, founder of the Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation. Rich Schmitt/Staff Photographer



The Pivotal Role Pacific Palisades is Playing in Ending Breast Cancer

Riviera resident **Helene Dameris** has remained an integral part of the Walk with Love since the inaugural fundraiser in 2008.

She had recently moved to the Palisades when her sister-in-law was diagnosed with stage-three breast cancer.

“I felt so helpless and wanted to honor her in some way for her brave battle,” she said. “In rapid succession, the mother of one of my daughter’s classmates and three women in Pacific Palisades Junior Women’s Club (now the **Pacific Palisades Woman’s Club**) were also diagnosed with breast cancer. I felt like it was all around me.”

After discovering that **Dr. Susan Love** was looking for volunteers to participate in a clinical trial for breast cancer research, Dameris didn’t hesitate to sign up.

“It turned out that Dr. Love performed the procedure on me and I had her rapt attention for two hours,” Dameris said. “I came home and was flabbergasted by what she had shared with me. It was clear to me that if anyone could eradicate breast cancer, it was Susan Love.”

Invigorated by Love’s determination, Dameris was compelled to support the doctor’s efforts to acquire funding for new research methods.

“I marched into her modest office on Via de la Paz and told her executive director that I wanted to have a walk for Dr. Love,” she said. “Here we are, seven years later, and we’ve raised almost \$500,000.”

To date, Walk with Love has generated \$440,000 – all of which has been funneled directly into research either piloted or facilitated by the **Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation**.

At the time, Dameris was the Community Ser-

vice Chair for PPJWC (now PPWC) who supported the Walk through volunteer efforts during the early years to help get the event up and running – or walking.

Now in its seventh year, Dameris continues to volunteer for the Walk with Love and identifies with Love’s sense of urgency to see the disease eradicated as she continues to add friends and family to her list of those diagnosed with the disease.



Dr. Susan Love (left) and Helene Dameris Photo courtesy of Helene Dameris

Focused on hope, survival and a future without breast cancer, Dameris said the Walk with Love is a day of celebration.

“The event is such an uplifting day and so much fun for the entire family. When you are surrounded by people who are currently in chemo or have finished their treatments or by people who have lost someone precious in their lives to breast cancer, you would think the mood could be somber, but that is not the case,” she said.

“You cannot help leaving the event walking a little taller and feeling empowered.”

5 Ways Palisadians Can ‘Walk with Love’

1. Register to walk or run the 5K course by visiting actwithlove.org/walk. Sign up for the morning of family fun and get started fundraising.
2. Support a walker, runner or Team Love by making a tax-deductible donation online. Every penny raised goes directly to researching the cause of breast cancer.
3. Out of town? Sign up to be a virtual walker. People all around the country will be walking and running their own 5K courses at the same time on the same day.
4. Join the Army of Women for the opportunity to directly participate in the research that will eradicate breast cancer once and for all. More than 375,000 women and men of every age and ethnicity, including breast cancer survivors and healthy participants have joined the movement to prevent breast cancer. Visit armyofwomen.org.
5. Agree to be in a study. The Foundation always needs healthy volunteers for biopsies and questionnaires for comparison purposes.

Walk with Love Happy Hour

The **Yogurt Shoppe** is hosting a Walk with Love “Happy Hour” Fundraiser from 5-7 p.m. **through May 10**. Fifteen percent of sales made will be donated directly to Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation.

Chamber Music Palisades To Premier Cuban Quartet by Local Composer

By SIERRA SHAFER
Staff Writer

The acclaimed Westside series, **Chamber Music Palisades**, will complete its 17th consecutive season on **May 6** with a broadly ranging program highlighted by the world premiere of “Cuban Stories: A quartet for flute, bass clarinet, viola and piano” by former Palisadian and Santa Monica-based composer **Adrienne Albert**. Music by Beethoven, Uhl and Bernstein will round out the program.

A trio of first chair performers will join CMP cofounders, **Susan Greenberg**, flutist and pianist **Delores Stevens** on stage for the final performance.

“Delores and Susan are both outstanding musicians and it is amazing that Chamber Music Palisades commissions a new piece for each performance,” Albert said. “It’s a wonderful thing for the Palisades community and a wonderful thing for composers in Los Angeles.”

Inspired by a recent trip to Cuba, this is the second work the

internationally renowned composer has created for the series. The piece is based on a pre-Castro Cuba, with a jazzy feel reminiscent of the 1950s, leading the listener through the revolution.

“Every street corner in Cuba has someone playing the violin or guitar or the drums and most of these people are self-taught. It’s really remarkable,” Albert said. “I consider it to be programmatic; it tells a story. But it’s up to the listener to decide on their own where that story leads.”

A composition graduate of UCLA, Albert began composing at age 10. Since the mid-1990s, her compositions have been performed throughout the United States, Europe, Thailand, Mexico, China and South Africa. She was the recipient of a 2006 National Endowment for the Arts Grant in conjunction with the American Composers Forum for a Continental Harmony Project in Alaska.

“I couldn’t be happier now composing full time,” she said. “It’s a wonderful and very creative expression.”

All CMP concerts are held in



Local composer Adrienne Albert
Photo courtesy of Adrienne Albert

the sanctuary at **St. Matthew’s Parish**, 1031 Bienvenida Avenue beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets for \$30 will be available at the door. Students are admitted free of charge.

For additional information call (310) 463-4388 or go to info@cmpalisades.org or online at cmpalisades.org.

Walk with Love

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We have to think out of the box to find the answer.”

NO TIME TO WASTE

Finding that answer is going to take more than a village. It is going to take an army. The Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation’s **Army of Women** has recruited more than 375,000 women and men of every age and ethnicity, including breast cancer survivors, women and men at high-risk for the disease, and healthy women and men, to partner with breast cancer researchers and directly participate in the research that will lead to eradicating breast cancer once and for all. The goal of the initiative is to challenge the scientific community to shift the emphasis of research beyond the cure to focus on breast cancer prevention research.

“We can all be part of this – even men. I figure, women have put up with being part of mankind; men can join the Army of Women,” Love said. “You want to be the person doing something, not the person standing on the sideline watching it happen – or not happen.”

In addition to the Army, the Walk With Love in the Palisades is one of the foundations greatest champions of the cause.

“The Walk is a big source of our funding and every penny we raise goes to research programs that nobody else has thought of,” Love said. “I call this ‘sweaty money.’ People walked and ran to get it and we can’t waste it. We have to put it to the best use we know how to.”

In many ways, the Walk brings Love’s efforts full circle. A 30-year-plus resident of the Palisades, the doctor did her early research in a small office behind a dry cleaner.

Driven by frustration with the lack of advancement in the research, Love moved from patient care to research not only to increase awareness but also to allocate funds for new research ideas.

She has since expanded into the Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation in Santa Monica and works from a fifth-floor office with a view of the ocean.

“We have big visions here. It helps to have big views,” she said.

However, Love said she has kept the walk in the Palisades not only because it’s home, but because of the wonderfully generous community. The hope this year is to at least match last year’s record-breaking efforts, she said.

“Palisadians are great about being involved in national and global movements – this is a

chance to make a major difference from your own backyard,” Love said. “Is there a better way to make an impact than going for a nice walk on a beautiful May morning with your friends and neighbors?”

Not only is the Walk With Love a chance to raise support for the cause, Love, who is a strong proponent of a healthy lifestyle and a three-time marathon fin-

isher, said it’s a great way to get some cancer-preventing exercise.

“Everybody can do a 5K and whether you walk or run, not only do you get a workout; you’re doing the fundraiser with all of these great people,” she said. “It’s a lovely walk and a great morning. There are kids, there are dogs – it’s for everyone of any age. It’s a great way to get your exercise and do some good at the same time.

“This is important,” she added. “We don’t have time to waste.”

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Archer School Film Festival

The **Archer School for Girls** will host its third annual student-run **Film Festival** on **May 1** on the school’s Brentwood campus from 10:15 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. with entertainment industry panelists speaking on challenges facing women in the entertainment industry, particularly from executive, creative and production standpoints.

Music at St. Matthew’s

Music at St. Matthew’s, 1031 Bienvenida, continues its season on **Friday, May 2** with a program of music by Mozart, Respighi and Takemitsu conducted by **Thomas Neenan**. Visit musicguildonline.org or call (310) 573-7422. Admission is \$35, \$10 for students with ID, children under 16 are free.

Visca’s “Turning Thirty” Premieres

Palisadian **Lisa Phillips Visca’s “Turning Thirty”** will open **May 3** at 7:30 p.m. Performances are Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. through June 29. For reservations, visit SantaMonicaPlayhouse.com or call (310) 394-9779 ext 1.

All Schools Elementary Honor Orchestra

Dozens of the Pacific Palisades’ talented young elementary students will perform at the **All Schools Elementary Honor Orchestra** on **Saturday, May 3** with shows at 10 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. The performance is produced by conductor and Palisadian **Larry Newman**.

Hike-A-Thon

NatureBridge is holding their third annual **Hike-A-Thon** in the Santa Monica Mountains on **May 3** from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Palisadians will hike the 2.25 mile Inspiration Point Loop at **Will Rogers State Historic Park** to raise funds for environmental education in the Santa Monica Mountains and Channel Islands. Henry Czerny of ABC’s “Revenge” will Emcee the event. Visit naturebridge.org/hike-socal.

Piano Studio Recital

Students from **The Piano Studio** will showcase popular, classical, blues, and accompaniment pieces all from memory at the **Palisades Lutheran Church** on **Sunday, May 4** at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Performances are free and open to the public, each followed by a reception.

NFL’s Greg Townsend To Speak

Sunset Crossing launches **Community Speakers Forum** with NFL’s Greg Townsend who will be discussing the NFL as well as his take on life’s challenges on **Sunday, May 4** at 6 p.m. Dinner is served at 5:30 p.m. in Janes Hall and offers a casual evening with contemporary music and hands-on mission projects. **Pacific Palisades Presbyterian Church** is located at 15821 Sunset Blvd. Visit palispres.org.

Palisades Symphony Orchestra

The Requiem by Giuseppe Verdi will be performed in memory of David Marshall Meyer on **Sunday, May 4** at 7:30 p.m. at the **Community United Methodist Church**, 801 Via de la Paz. Music director **Joel B. Lish** will conduct the concert. Free of admission charge.

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