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Form a Local Group

You do not need to act alone. It is much easier and more fun working with others who think and feel the same way. You could join an existing environmental, women's, or health group or a church, labor, service or social justice group and persuade them to start a Prevent Cancer campaign.

If you want to form a new group, we suggest that you invite people to your home to discuss the idea. Make a flyer and post it on notice boards in community halls, cafés, shops, health clinics, colleges, libraries and women's centers. Send an e-mail to everyone you know. Many

- Activist Toolbox: www.ran.org/action/toolbox
- Activist Toolkit: www.onenw.org/bin/page.cfm/secid/5
- Activists Tools: www.environmentalleague.org/activist.html
- Breast Cancer Fund: www.breastcancerfund.org
- *Calling All Activists*, by Meghan Taylor: www.beyondpesticides.org/lawn/activist
- Community Campaign ideas: www.come-clean.org/stepscom.htm
- Fun with Fundraising: www.bcaction.org/Pages/Membership/FunWithFundraising.html
- *Preparing for a Campaign*, by Mary O'Brien: www.beyondpesticides.org/Search/O'Brien
- Starting a Nonprofit Society: www.snpo.org/resources/startup.php
- Toolkit for Boards: www.managementhelp.org/boards/boards.htm
- Virtual Activist: www.netaction.org/training

We climb to demonstrate our commitment, to ourselves and to others, that we stand for a world in which cancer is a thing of the past. We apply our courage and faith that anything is possible, if taken one step at a time. And we do it all as part of a team, climbers and supporters, knowing that there is more that we can achieve together than apart.

— Andrea Ravinett Martin

successful groups were started by just one or two people, such as the Women's Community Cancer Project (Boston), Breast Cancer Action Montreal and the Breast Cancer Research and Education Fund (St. Catharines, Ontario).

The Breast Cancer Fund

Based in San Francisco, the Breast Cancer Fund (BCF) was founded by Andrea Ravinett Martin in her living room in 1992. At the age of 45, she had been treated for breast cancer, and both breasts had been surgically removed. Andrea wanted to transform the breast cancer epidemic from a private secret to a public health priority and persuaded anyone who would join to help her.

One of the group's first successes was to write and secure the passage of California legislation for a two-cent cigarette tax to fund breast cancer research and detection services for uninsured women. Then in 1995, Andrea and 16 other survivors climbed Mt. Aconcagua in Argentina and raised \$1 million, saying that climbing mountains was like facing breast cancer. In subsequent years, survivors and supporters have climbed Mt. McKinley, Mt. Fuji and Mt. Shasta, winning worldwide attention and more donations.

In 1997 they funded and hosted the premiere screening of *Rachel's Daughters: Searching for the Causes of Breast Cancer*, reaching 3.2 million people through HBO in the first month. In 1999 they worked with legislators to increase the

budget for the Centers for Disease Control's Environmental Health Laboratory from \$7 to \$21 million, to identify the environmental causes of breast cancer.

In 2000 the BCF ran a public awareness ad in Bay Area bus shelters called Obsessed with Breasts, which showed models with mastectomy scars (taken from Andrea's own scars), asking, "Society is obsessed with breasts, but what are we doing about breast cancer?" In 2001 they adopted the mission of identifying and advocating for the elimination of the environmental and other preventable causes of breast cancer.

They established a LifeLines program in 2002 to provide meals, transport, emergency funds and in-home care to low-income and uninsured women with breast cancer. They also organized International Hearings on Breast Cancer and the Environment for the California legislature, initiated the first International Summit on Breast Cancer and the Environment, and published the report *State of the Evidence: What Is the Connection Between Chemicals and Breast Cancer?*

In 2003 they worked with others to persuade San Francisco to adopt the precautionary principle (the first city in the US to do so), launched a Spanish language outreach program and initiated the Strong Voices Leadership Development Program to help people build leadership confidence and create a nationwide network of survivors who are willing to share their stories and inspire others to take action against breast cancer. That same year, Andrea died, two years after being diagnosed with a malignant brain tumor. Before she died, she had traveled to New



Andrea Ravinett Martin's ad in the *New York Times*. She passed away in August 2003 following a two-year struggle with brain cancer.

York and Washington DC and was featured in a *New York Times* ad that said, "Warning — Andrea Martin contains 59 cancer-causing chemicals." Under Andrea's leadership, the Fund has grown to 70,000 supporters who continue to pursue her dream of a world without breast cancer.

We can all be leaders if we have the courage to take it one step at a time. There are many sources of advice that you can draw on to form a thriving group. Two that we recommend are *Calling All Activists*, by Meghan Taylor, and *Preparing for a Campaign*, by Mary O'Brien.

Over the years, her vision, her light, illuminates our lives. Sunlight for our cloud-filled days, moonlight and starlight, a nightlight to sooth our midnight fears.

— Wanna Wright