

**Care, Information, Support:
Local and Regional Resources for Women and Their Families**

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Note: While this article highlights organizations and programs located in the Mid-Hudson Valley of New York, a number of them are available throughout the Country. To find out if your community offers similar programs, contact your physician, the public relations departments of your local hospitals, the American Cancer Society, or look in your local newspapers for program announcements.

In the early 1990s our government began dedicating more monies to learn about, and address, health issues specific to women. One result has been an increase in efforts to improve the care and support of women as they face the wide variety of health concerns particular to their gender. This is as true for the Mid-Hudson Valley as it is for the nation. We turn here, then, to a look at some of the area's hospital-based and grassroots programs which seek to help women in their attempt to understand and manage the various conditions they experience, whether those conditions be due to illness or the natural life cycle.

WOMEN'S CENTERS

Kingston Hospital's Women's Health Services

Ulster County is fortunate to boast one of the nation's small but growing numbers of women's health centers. In addition to exam and waiting rooms for a wide variety of women's diagnosis and treatment services, the new wing housing Kingston Hospital's Women's Health Center – which opens in April 2003 – will also have space set aside for consultations with experts in the fields of, for instance, marriage and family counseling, nutrition, fertility services, and nurses trained to provide genetic education. Support and community education are, as well, other important components of this women's health services program. Besides a breast cancer support group (with other groups being considered), they work with community organizations on a variety of education programs that cut across boundaries of age and issues. And, as some readers may already know, they host an annual, day-long, women's health and fitness conference. Last but not least, when the wing opens, it will also have an in-house resource center, open to the general public, with two Internet stations and a library of books, tapes and videos. For more information about the program's offerings, contact the Women's Center at 845-334-2712.

The Rose Women's Care Service, Community Resource Center

Providing information, conducting educational events and, in general, empowering women to make choices for their health and well being, serve as the cornerstone of the Resource Center's mission. Located in Highland, NY but serving Ulster, Dutchess, and Orange Counties, this grassroots not-for-profit offers information management services,

which include a lending library and access to Internet searches. They also offer programs on topics that span the life cycle of women and families – from youth to old age. Topics include: nutritional guidelines, heart healthy pathways, menopause remedies, fertility awareness options, childbirth and parenting preparation, and more. For information about current and future offerings, call 845-691-7984.

MENOPAUSE: Red Hot Mamas®

This program aims to empower women to educate themselves and become active participants in menopause management. These licensed programs, available throughout the United States, meet monthly to address a variety of relevant issues. One such program is located at Vassar Brothers Medical Center in Poughkeepsie. For information about their program topics and dates, call 437-4036. For information on local programs in your area, call 203-431-3902.

CANCER: DETECTION, SUPPORT

Breast Health Navigators

This federally funded program, offered by both Vassar Brother's Medical Center and Benedictine Hospital, is part of our nation's effort find the best ways to provide integrated breast health services for women. Because of the need to emphasize those services that meet the needs of their particular communities, each program is unique. They both offer, however, help in getting mammograms. And they both assist individual breast cancer patients in navigating the healthcare system and accessing resources. For more information, call:

Benedictine Hospital: 334-3082.

Vassar Brothers: 454-8500

Benedictine Hospital's Oncology Support Program

Serving both men and women, this program has not forgotten its women-centered roots. Originally affiliated with Benedictine Hospital's Fern Feldman Anolick Breast Center, this program first added ovarian cancer groups, then groups for men with cancer as well as for families of people with cancer. Grounded in a philosophy called Constructive Living, this support and education program also offers arts and healing programs such as movement and exercise; writing; painting; and an improvisational theater group that visits patients. In addition, they offer: educational talks open to the general public (many of which relate to complementary medicine); the Nurturing Neighborhood Network (individual support and advocacy provided by trained cancer survivors); a lending library; and a free, bi-monthly newsletter with announcements of events, columns by physicians, and lots of useful cancer and wellness information. To learn more about these and other services, call 845-338-2500 ext. 4453.

Breast Cancer Options, part of the Mid-Hudson Options Project, Inc.

This not-for-profit provides breast cancer support, health advocacy and information. Serving Ulster, Dutchess, Columbia, Greene and Sullivan Counties, it sponsors an annual conference that draws speakers and patients from across the nation. Other offerings include: a free, informational email newsletter for patients and professionals and a website with program information and relevant articles. They also respond to phone calls

or emails from people with a wide range of questions, providing help with such things as reading reports, finding doctors who treat breast cancer, diets, and so on. Two noteworthy offerings, currently being developed are a Breast Cancer Resource Guide and a Companion/Advocates Program, where survivors of breast cancer will be trained to provide information, advocacy and support to women facing breast cancer. For more information, visit the [Breast Cancer Options website](#) or contact Hope Nemiroff at 845-657-8222 or nemiroff@ulster.net.

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