Breast Cancer Research Stamp

I recently received a letter from a constituent on a plain white envelope. In the corner was a brightly colored Breast Cancer Research Stamp. I always smile when I see one of these because I know that each one brings us closer to finding a cure for breast cancer.

In 1998, I heard from breast cancer survivors and family members of women who succumbed to the disease, offering their stories in support of a proposed Breast Cancer Research Stamp. Their efforts were rewarded when the stamp became the first-ever "semipostal," meaning the 60-cent stamp does more than just cover first-class postage.

The extra cents are divided between the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense, both of which conduct breast cancer research.

A few cents may sound like small change, but all told, the stamp has raised over $81 million for breast cancer research.

Breast cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say that breast cancer remains the most common cancer among women.

More than 2.8 million women have been diagnosed with breast cancer. A lesser-known fact is that more than 2,000 men will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year.

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 292,000 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, and more than 40,000 will die.

Yet if detected early, the five-year survival rate is 99 percent.

Thanks to breakthroughs in cancer research, more and more women are surviving this deadly disease. And every dollar we raise helps us save more lives.

We all need a stamp at one time or another, and the Breast Cancer Research Stamp is just one way to contribute to an important cause.

It is my hope the Breast Cancer Research Stamp will help to continue public awareness on this devastating disease and provide hope to breast cancer survivors.

Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator

The Breast Cancer Research Stamp

The idea behind the stamp originated in California. It came from a Sacramento breast cancer surgeon, Dr. Ernie Bodai, who has treated over 7,000 women with breast cancer. Ernie teamed with Betsy Mullen, a breast cancer survivor from San Diego, and David Goodman, who lost his wife to breast cancer and hails from Orinda, to advocate on behalf of the stamp.

The stamp was designed by Ethel Kessler of Bethesda, Maryland, and illustrated by Whitney Sherman of Baltimore, Maryland. This is the first stamp design by Kessler, who has a personal interest in helping raise awareness about breast cancer as she is a survivor of the disease.

The Breast Cancer Research Stamp

I worked with former Senators Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Lauch Faircloth (R-N.C.) to craft the original Senate legislation to authorize the stamp, while the House legislation was sponsored by former Representatives Vic Fazio (D-Sacramento) and Susan Molinari (R-N.Y.).

Since 1998, when the stamp was first issued, legislation to reauthorize the stamp has passed six times. In the 114th Congress, I introduced legislation with Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) to extend congressional approval for the stamp through 2019. It was signed into law in December 2015.

The stamp is supported by the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Association for Cancer Research, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American College of Surgeons, Are You Dense Advocacy, Breast Cancer Fund, Center for Women Policy Studies, Susan G. Komen, Breast Cancer Research Foundation and the Tigerlily Foundation.

An Interview wit

The doctor who came up w

Q: How did you first come up with the idea for the stamp?

A: In the late 1990s, I got frustrated with the slow pace of research in breast cancer and looked for another mechanism to raise funds. I was preparing a talk on the history of breast cancer. To do that I used art history books. I saw all these beautiful images and literally on Christmas Eve thought "Wouldn't it be great if there was a stamp for breast cancer?" And if we price it a little bit higher, the extra funds could go toward research.

Dr. Erni

Q: Describe your experience advocating for the stamp's creation in Washington.

A: Going through the process I got a great education in civics. It took 15 trips to Washington D.C. and meetings with many members, but we got the bill passed after about a year and a half!

h Dr. Ernie Bodai
vith the idea for the stamp

Q: Describe the advances that have been made through research funded by the stamp.

A: A number of fascinating advances have been made. The first big one is the development of more accurate imaging technologies, including 3-D mammograms.

e Bodai

The second one is a test that looks at the genetic makeup of a patient's tumor and predicts whether the patient will benefit from chemotherapy. Fifteen years ago, almost every woman diagnosed with breast cancer was given chemotherapy, not knowing whether she really needed it.

The third is advances in nanotechnology. Since the human genome was unraveled in the mid-1990s, we've been able to develop targeted therapies. You kill the cancer cells from within and eliminate the side effects of chemotherapy. Even though these funds are directed toward breast cancer the findings are relevant to other cancers. We're fighting cancer on all fronts!

A Record of Success

The Breast Cancer Research Stamp costs 60 cents and is deemed valid as a 49-cent first-class stamp. The additional 11 cents charged for each stamp goes to research. This stamp does not replace the regular priced first class stamp, but simply gives buyers the option to purchase a new stamp to raise funds to fight a cancer that impacts the lives of so many American families.

To date, the stamp has raised more than $81 million to find a cure for the disease. More than 1 billion stamps have been sold.

Seventy percent of the research funds generated by the stamp are directed to research programs at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The remaining 30 percent of the research funds are directed to the Department of Defense breast cancer research program.

The Breast Cancer Research Stamp was the first stamp in our nation's history dedicated to raising funds for a special cause. The stamp's success has inspired other fundraising stamps including the Heroes of 2001 stamp, which raised money for the family of emergency personnel who died or were disabled during the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

"With the Breast Cancer Research Semipostal Stamp, Americans have used the power of the mail to raise awareness about this disease as well as hope for the cure."

– Postmaster General and CEO Megan J. Brennan

A Record of Success

During a time when federal and state research budgets are being targeted for cuts, funding is desperately needed for cancer research.

I pledge to continue my support of this unique postal stamp. To ensure the stamp's continued success, I look forward working with the Post Office and nationwide retailers to increase awareness of the stamp and make sure it's widely available.

Through the hard work of Dr. Bodai, the Breast Cancer Research Stamp has now been issued in 16 countries, including Hungary, Belize, Grenada, Gambia, Micronesia, Kenya, Kosovo, Israel, Sweden and El Salvador, to raise awareness and funding to fight this disease worldwide. All of the funds raised in each country stay in that country.

"Today, thanks to breakthroughs in cancer research, more and more people are becoming cancer survivors rather than cancer victims. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are 14 million cancer survivors in the U.S. today. Every dollar we can raise through these stamps to fight breast cancer will help save lives."

– Senator Dianne Feinstein

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