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Pleasanton ValleyCare opens breast cancer boutique

Bras, camisoles, and compression garments among store items

by Cierra Bailey

ValleyCare Health Library of Pleasanton held the official grand opening of its new breast cancer boutique this week.

In a partnership with Fremont-based nonprofit HERS (Hope, Empowerment, Renewal and Support) Breast Cancer Foundation, ValleyCare is now the home of a specialty boutique to offer prosthetics, bras and camisoles for breast cancer patients and compression garments for patients with lymphedema.

A certified fitting specialist will be on-site by appointment to provide personalized care and proper fittings for women. "We currently have these services at Washington Hospital in Fremont and Stanford Health Care in Palo Alto, and I am excited that we are expanding and offering this service here in the Tri-Valley," said Vera Packard, MD, executive director for the HERS Breast Cancer Foundation.

The boutique is staffed by a team from HERS Breast Cancer Foundation along with volunteers. The store is currently open every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Many insurance plans will pay for all or a portion of the garments from the boutique so HERS Breast Cancer Foundation will bill insurance directly, according to ValleyCare officials.

"What happens with some breast cancer patients is that after their treatment, they don't even want to look in the mirror because the mirror has no mercy," Packard said. "Our breast care specialists are very caring people and it's all about taking care of the woman and using the tools that we have to make her feel better about herself."

Women who do not have breast cancer can also go to the boutique for specialized fittings and can purchase bras from them as well. According to Packard, funds received from purchased bras help keep the business running. "Our bras are also pretty beautiful and sexy and it's not anything that looks medical," she said.

The American Cancer Society Wig Shop, also located inside ValleyCare's Health Library, offers new and styled wigs at no charge to patients. Trained volunteers and staff assist clients in the selection and fittings of the wigs. The ACS Wig Shop is open Monday - Thursday, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

"Since the Library is located just upstairs from the Cancer Center, we are pleased to offer a convenient shopping experience for our cancer patients," said Denise Estrada, manager of Cancer Services and Patient Resources at ValleyCare.

The ValleyCare Health Library and the HERS Breast Cancer Foundation boutique are located at 5725 W. Las Positas Blvd, suite 270 in Pleasanton. Call 734-3315 for appointments.

The newly remodeled health library also offers books, diagrams, brochures and an online database system that patients can use to learn more about their illnesses and how to cope through rigorous treatments. Knitting, yoga, support group meetings and other programs are held in the health library as well.

Photos



The back wall of the Breast Cancer Boutique holds a case of shelves lined with boxes of bra's and other garments in various styles and sizes underneath a banner that spells out the HERS acronym, " Hope, Empowerment, Renewal, Support." (Photo by Cierra Bailey).



Annette Lewellyn (L), is a HERS breast care specialist assisting at the new ValleyCare store. Vicki Goss (R) is a volunteer at the new breast cancer boutique and donates handmade "ChemoCare Bags" filled with items to help patients cope during chemotherapy. (Photo by Cierra Bailey).



New and styled wigs courtesy of the American Cancer Society are also available within the ValleyCare Health Library and boutique at no cost to patients. (Photo by Cierra Bailey).