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Breast cancer agency receives \$25K grant

Chris Rooney

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The Marin Breast Cancer Watch program received a \$25,000 grant from the San Francisco Foundation to help the agency reach out to the county's most neglected residents. The grant will support MBCW's Diverse Communities Outreach Program, opening a line of communication to potential cancer victims whose voices have not been heard. "This is the second grant we've received from the San Francisco Foundation for this program," said MBCW Executive Director Janice Barlow. "The first grant gave us a year to look at what we're doing and to make sure that we're increasing our diversity, not just racially, but also in age and geography." Barlow explained that the first round of funding gave the MBCW an opportunity to investigate the region and to determine if every-

one's concerns were being met. A great deal of the current breast cancer research is reliant on feedback from the community, so Barlow said it was imperative that the entire county be represented. The new grant will allow the MBCW a chance to implement what was gleaned from the previous research and to reach out to the segments of Marin County that have not been able to participate in the process. The overall purpose of the program, as well as some collaborative research, is to determine if environmental factors are playing a role in the county's high breast cancer rate, which typically ranks higher than most of the rest of the nation. While genetic and other factors are also being assessed, there has been a recent movement to see if the soil, air or water in a region can have an effect on the residents' cancer rates. A broad range of other environmental factors is also being analyzed. "We're trying to

get more feedback," said Barlow. "And we're including people from San Francisco and Alameda."

The MBCW believes that people potentially affected by breast cancer are a valuable research tool and that community-based analysis is crucial in determining a cause for the disease. Specifically, the funding will address a wide range of Bay Area citizens, from all walks of life. A part-time multicultural, bilingual community-outreach coordinator will be hired and focus groups will be established so that there is a broad exchange of ideas and knowledge. "The input we receive from the community can be just as valuable as what the researchers provide," said Barlow. "We're proud to be the recipient of this grant. The San Francisco Foundation has really taken the lead in terms of addressing the health disparity among under-represented communities."