We’re not giving up on you

Aurora, diagnosed at 43
Pictured with husband Gerry

ANNUAL REPORT 2020
The Rose isn’t giving up

Words from our CEO/Co-Founder, Dorothy Gibbons

The Rose’s Fiscal Year runs from August 1 through July 31 and that means that our past year was equally divided by Pre-COVID and Mid-COVID. As we look back, marveling at the contrast between those two periods of time, our continued hope and prayer is that you, our community of friends and supporters, continue to stay safe.

Pre-COVID, The Rose was on target to serve over 40,000 women and more uninsured than the previous year. We were anxiously awaiting the arrival of another mobile mammography coach and set to start a brand new program that would help our patients find a medical home. Most importantly, we were finding cancers at early stages and navigating those uninsured women who were diagnosed into treatment in record time.

Then COVID-19 entered and our world changed overnight. Although biopsies and diagnostic work-ups are deemed essential services, the worldwide shortage of Personal Protective Equipment forced us to close both Centers and stop the Mobile Program in March. Those eight weeks of being closed meant a $3,000,000 loss in revenue.

There has been so much that all of us had to give up since March 2020. Going to work, school, and church, good health, being with friends and loved ones, -- the list is as long as your arm and different for everyone. Some people lost promising careers or thriving businesses through no fault of their own. Others lost their lives despite the heroic efforts of healthcare providers.

Nothing prepared any of us for what those losses would mean to our daily lives or their toll on our souls. Nothing prepared us for the grief or the fear of what’s next or if this pandemic will ever end. We have all had to deal with unimaginable challenges and learn to rely on each other for encouragement and support.

That’s why I know that no matter what, The Rose isn’t giving up!

Our donors are the number one reason that we reopened our doors in May and why The Rose will make it through this pandemic and be stronger on the other side of it. We won’t… we can’t… give up caring for our patients or helping the uninsured. We’re not giving up on offering every woman, regardless of her ability to pay, a chance to live.

Our amazing staff is doing everything they can to serve as many patients as possible. They are working longer hours and Saturdays and making sure to prioritize those needing diagnostics. This is the same staff that all agreed to a reduction in pay to offset our losses and ensure that The Rose would survive. They are the heart of The Rose and I so appreciate them.

How will we ever be able to thank our insured clients for their patience and loyalty? They know how much we depend on them to care for the uninsured. The same is true of our mobile mammography partners, Federally Qualified Health Centers, community clinics, and physician offices; all found ways to protect patients’ safety and helped us serve those most in need.
“Like everyone in that moment when they get the news, I didn’t think it would happen to me.” But Aurora Garcia knew more than most 43-year-olds about breast cancer. She knew it could happen to anyone at any time. She knew the importance of both women and men having access to mammograms. She had spent many hours supporting The Rose and its mission, volunteering at events, being part of phone banks, answering questions. She was all too aware of the impact breast cancer has on a family.

Aurora’s 4-year marriage to Gerry had brought her into a family that had already lost so much from breast cancer and were warriors in raising awareness. The Rose had been the lifeline for Gerry’s first wife, Ana Barron Garcia. She had spent nearly a year trying to find answers watching her symptoms worsen. Due to being uninsured, Ana was referred to The Rose and it was there that she was diagnosed with Inflammatory Breast Cancer IBC, an aggressive and often fatal cancer. She was 30 years old. In spite of first-class medical treatment, made possible through The Rose, and her own courageous and gallant fight, five years later she lost her battle, leaving behind Gerry and their young children, ten-year-old Bryanna and five-year-old Maverick.

Gerry’s grief soon turned to resolve when Ana’s brother, Daniel, created “30 for Ana,” a 30-mile run, as a platform for raising awareness about IBC. At every opportunity, they shared Ana’s story, always emphasizing that IBC is too often misdiagnosed in young women. Running a grueling 30 miles, the distance between The Rose, the medical center and her grave, Gerry, Daniel, Ana’s family and a host of volunteers have made 30 for Ana a major annual fundraiser for The Rose. As of 2019, they have raised more than $210,000 to provide care for uninsured, young women and men.

When Aurora came into Gerry’s life, she too took up this fight working alongside the entire family, attending every run, recruiting volunteers, raising funds and whatever was required, proud to be part of the events that honored Ana.

The day Aurora received the call to meet with Dr. Dixie Melillo for her biopsy results, Gerry knew all too well what that call could mean. In her heart, Aurora knew also.

Now breast cancer became personal and once again it was a family affair. Braving the most difficult and heart-wrenching step, they told their children. Aurora’s children, Jonathan and Bibiana, were having this conversation for the first time while Bryanna and Maverick had been there before. Her family, his family, all appalled by the news, all knew this disease too well, but none were about to give up. They did what they have always done – rally, support and fight together.

Even though Aurora’s cancer was not IBC, at stage 3B it was going to be the fight of her life. She faced a series of surgeries, months of treatment, and multiple trips to hospitals and appointments. COVID-19 meant she had to continue chemotherapy treatment, radiation treatment, every after-surgery recovery and every trip alone. Families, loved ones, friends were not allowed to be with her. Those days were especially hard. She knew that even when they could not be physically by her side, her family and Ana’s family were there in spirit. Their notes, their calls, their prayers kept her going and her faith in God never let her give up.

Although having to keep her distance from many of those offering support, her long-time companion and 11-year-old dog Pixie was always there to offer love and comfort. Ironically, a few months after Aurora’s diagnosis, Pixie too was diagnosed with mammary cancer. After surgery and a similar fighting spirit, today she is also a cancer survivor.

Today, a survivor herself, treatment nearly complete and slowly recovering her strength again, Aurora is readying for this year’s 30 for Ana event. She has committed to walk 5 miles for the virtual event while bringing awareness to breast cancer and raising much-needed funds for The Rose.

She’s part of a family that knows a lot about not giving up... on her, on him, on us.

“Her family, his family, all appalled by the news, all knew this disease too well, but none were about to give up. They did what they have always done – rally, support and fight together.”

By: Shannon McNair

Teresa Och’s Photography
By: Anna McAndrews

Ediana

"Because of The Rose I am alive! You gave me life, you gave me hope, and because of you I can dream, and I have a future."

As a student in her last year of college, Ediana was looking forward to graduation, a new job and life after college. Unfortunately, life had other plans. The Monday following her May commencement, the 29-year old received a call from a doctor at The Rose confirming that she indeed had breast cancer.

But that is not where her story begins.

The previous October, Ediana felt a lump in her right breast and visited her local university clinic. She was told that the lump was probably due to her menstrual cycle and not to worry. She reports she heard the two clinicians laugh at her question about needing a mammogram as she left the exam room. “You’re too young for a mammogram,” she was told.

Patient & 5-Year Breast Cancer Survivor

Celebrating the tenacity of a 5-Year Breast Cancer Survivor

By: Anna McAndrews

As a student in her last year of college, Ediana was looking forward to graduation, a new job and life after college. Unfortunately, life had other plans. The Monday following her May commencement, the 29-year old received a call from a doctor at The Rose confirming that she indeed had breast cancer.

But that is not where her story begins.

The previous October, Ediana felt a lump in her right breast and visited her local university clinic. She was told that the lump was probably due to her menstrual cycle and not to worry. She reports she heard the two clinicians laugh at her question about needing a mammogram as she left the exam room. “You’re too young for a mammogram,” she was told.

Thinking she was overreacting, she put her breast issue aside and continued to work toward her graduation. Her breast continued to be an issue; it grew from the size of a marble to the size of a golf ball; the breast became inflamed and changed color. It was late spring, and she was focused on her engineering studies and exams and had no time for breast cancer. But when her mother saw her breast, she panicked and insisted she visit a doctor immediately.

At the clinic, she received an exam and antibiotics to fight off an infection, as well as an ultrasound. The next day the doctor called with urgency, and with devastating news, he thought it could be cancer.

Nothing can be scarier than to be told that you may have breast cancer, except if you are uninsured.

Thankfully, the doctor referred Ediana to The Rose.

“The Rose called immediately, and within a week, I had financial assistance I needed for the exams, medical appointments, and all the support anyone could hope for.”

By the age of 30, Ediana was dealing with Stage 4 invasive breast cancer and was treated with the most aggressive drugs available. It has not been an easy road, but she credits her faith, family, friends, and The Rose for getting her through her cancer experience.

Don’t give cancer any power; if you give it power, it can destroy you. If you don’t, you win—sage advice from this grateful breast cancer survivor.

Ediana credits The Rose with her life today. “Because of The Rose I am alive! You gave me life, you gave me hope, and because of you I can dream, and I have a future.”
Not giving up on the newly uninsured

By: Sarah Dorenbach

We all know a person who has been diagnosed with breast cancer and whose world has been completely turned upside down - impacting family, friends, and the local community in which they live. As if a breast cancer diagnosis weren't bad enough in and of itself, imagine being diagnosed without any health insurance. Unfortunately, this is the current reality for many Texans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Rose recently served a patient, Lisa, who was laid off from her job due to the current pandemic. She was accustomed to having health insurance. It was time for Lisa’s annual mammogram and The Rose was the only resource available to her. Not only did she receive no-cost breast health care, but she also said that everyone at The Rose was very kind and offered the best customer service.

Unemployment means no health insurance.

In the weeks and months, maybe years ahead, The Rose will see many patients like Lisa and we must be prepared to meet their needs. As people do not return to work, the number of newly uninsured people will continue to increase and we anticipate the increase in overwhelming numbers.

It’s never easy to ask for help, particularly in our work-ethnic culture. It’s especially difficult if a person has never had to ask for help before. It is not easy to set aside one’s pride and go “hat in hand” asking for a once routine service.

That’s why we will ask on behalf of the newly uninsured people, who are the other victims of COVID-19.

We know the consequences if we don’t. We also know that with your help, women and men will not have to die from breast cancer.

COVID-19 has already claimed too many lives.

According to the USA Families July 2020 report, “The COVID-19 Pandemic and Resulting Economic Crash Have Caused the Greatest Health Insurance Losses in American History”, the increase in the number of uninsured adults, which resulted from the economic downturn just during the short period from February to May 2020, was 39% larger than any annual increase ever recorded.

Consider the facts. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, one in three working adults in Texas did not have health insurance. A staggering 3.2 million Texans have applied for unemployment since March. An estimated 1.6 million Texans no longer have health insurance. Texas ranks number two among states with the highest number of newly uninsured people.

There are some procedures that simply can’t be done remotely. A mammogram is one, a biopsy is another.

Telling a patient that they have cancer simply must be done in-person. Even though we can’t hold their hand or hug them right now, COVID-19 won’t stop us from sitting by their side as our physician explain the biopsy results.

“You have breast cancer” are among the most difficult words for any person to hear. “You have breast cancer” immediately translates into your life will never be the same, not during the months ahead, not whenever you must face another test, not for a very long time. Someday you will reach all the milestones; someday, you will hear that you are “cancer-free.” But on that day, when you hear those biopsy results, your world will stop, your mind and body will go numb and those “somedays” feel very far away.

The patient who doesn’t have insurance has all the same fears as an insured patient. They worry if they’ll survive, wonders if they will live to raise their children, and is understandably afraid of what the future holds.

But when an uninsured patient is diagnosed, their first question is, “How will I pay for this?” For those patients, our patient navigators have the answers.

Treatment is expensive, and enduring the medical processes and testing along the way is daunting. Qualifying the uninsured patient for a treatment program is the navigator’s first step. There aren’t many options, but our navigators know each one, and they also know timely treatment is the patient’s only hope for survival. Once approved for treatment at a local hospital or medical center, patient navigators continue to be the patient’s companion, helping them access services all along the way. Even knowing where to park can be an overwhelming decision when you’re facing a day of chemotherapy.

Navigators coach patients through doctor visits and difficult conversations with families. They provide information about local resources for access to food, rent assistance programs, transportation, and medical management. They help their children understand “what is happening to Mommy or Daddy.”

Known by patients as a “trusted friend,” patient navigators do whatever it takes to guide women through difficult and complex financial and cultural hurdles that otherwise would land women in the emergency room or financially bankrupt.

Patient Navigators
The uninsured patient’s secret to survival

Lisa, Newly Uninsured

Patient Navigators are the first to encourage them and will continue to be by their side, celebrating with them every victory along the way to recovery.

The uninsured patient diagnosed with breast cancer is 60% more likely than an insured patient to die from the disease. That’s one statistic we can’t live with. Patient navigators are the uninsured patient’s secret to survival. That’s what we offer to the 153 uninsured patients who were diagnosed and navigated into treatment by The Rose this past year.

An estimated 1,600,000 Texans no longer have health insurance.

Texas ranks #2 among states with highest number of newly uninsured people.
The new faces on our team

Pamela Lovett | Chair of the Board

The Rose welcomes Pamela Lovett as the new Chair of the Board of Directors and announces the election of new officers. Pamela has supported The Rose since 2007 when she initiated the organization’s first signature luncheon and has served on The Rose Board of Directors since 2018. “The Rose is most fortunate to have a strong, committed board, talented staff and an amazing array of supporters” said Pamela, “As chair, I send my thanks to everyone for your investment of time, talent and treasure.”

Ann Al-Bahish | Board Member

Ann Al-Bahish is our newest member of the board and is a Partner at Haynes and Boone, LLP. She specializes in environmental and commercial matters. Ann also has a background and expertise in public health earning her Ph.D. in public health from the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. Ann is a founding and current board member of the nonprofit Doctors For Change, serves as Chair and Chair Emerita of the board of Healthcare for the Homeless-Houston, and is on the board of the Houston Area Women’s Center. With a strong personal and familial connection to breast cancer and the toll it takes, Ann is honored to join the board and believes that The Rose is a valuable safety net and the first step for many in fighting a deadly disease that has killed so many of our friends and family.

William J. Donovan | Board Member

Bill Donovan, community volunteer and retired from owning and operating a logistics company, Universal Terminal Warehouse Company, headquartered in Houston, has joined The Rose’s Board. Donovan brings a history of business expertise, military and volunteer service to The Rose. He learned of The Rose after his wife, Karen, was diagnosed with breast cancer. Exposure to those in need through his travels around the world and knowing that Karen was blessed with insurance and access to excellent care, Bill feels that The Rose is a perfect place to use his managerial and life experiences to help a local organization serving the needs of those less fortunate.

Theresa Einhorn | Board Member

Theresa Einhorn, retired attorney from Haynes and Boone, LLP joined the board in 2019. While practicing law, she handled complex financings and commercial transactions while serving as head of the Energy Finance Working Group. In retirement, she has brought her experience and leadership skills to many community organizations including, but not limited to, the Society for the Performing Arts, the Greater Houston Partnership’s Executive Women’s Partnership and the United Way of Greater Houston. A lifelong advocate, her passion to empower women has been woven throughout all areas of her life, including her career, leadership roles and volunteer efforts. The Rose’s mission to provide access to breast cancer screening, diagnostic and treatment services regardless of the patient's ability to pay resonated deeply with Theresa as the right mission for Houston and knowing that Karen was blessed with insurance and access to excellent care, Bill feels that The Rose is a perfect place to use his managerial and life experiences to help a local organization serving the needs of those less fortunate.

Beth Gilliard | Board Member

Beth Gilliard joined the board in 2020 and is an Accredited ACH Professional and Senior Vice President Treasury Management Services at Texas Citizens Bank- Pasadena, Texas. She has worked in banking for more than 40 years. Over the last 35 years, she has made a name for herself in Treasury Management Services. Beth is an advocate and has a passion to educate women on financial literacy. She is honored to bring that passion to The Rose’s mission where she is impressed with the organization’s empathy and focus on patient care and cost to the patient is not an issue.

Beth Gilliard | Board Member

Beth Gilliard joined the board in 2020 and is an Accredited ACH Professional and Senior Vice President Treasury Management Services at Texas Citizens Bank - Pasadena, Texas. She has worked in banking for more than 40 years. Over the last 35 years, she has made a name for herself in Treasury Management Services. Beth is an advocate and has a passion to educate women on financial literacy. She is honored to bring that passion to The Rose’s mission where she is impressed with the organization’s empathy and focus on patient care and cost to the patient is not an issue.

Dr. Raz | Radiologist

Dr. Sarfaraz Sadruddin, better known as Dr. Raz, has a long history of advocating for advancements in breast imagery. He received his MD from the Chicago Medical School in North Chicago, his residency in Diagnostic Radiology at Baylor College of Medicine and his Breast Imaging Fellowship at the University of Texas Medical Branch. With a grandmother-in-law diagnosed with early advanced breast cancer, Dr. Raz acknowledges how dangerous this cancer can be if not identified earlier. He cautions that this is not the time to delay screening, breast cancer is not going to wait until the pandemic is over. He is eager to contribute to the mission of The Rose and believes that this unique approach to care is something very few institutions can match.

Towo Babayemi | Practicum

Towo Babayemi is completing a practicum at The Rose, focusing her research on the impact of health care policy changes on breast cancer disparities and the impact of COVID among screening habits within diverse populations. A second-year MPH student at UT Health School of Public Health, she has been a breast cancer policy advocate and has a deep understanding of the importance of policy in addressing health disparities. Her academic research, along with her lived experiences in the U.S. Healthcare System as a Nigerian immigrant, has determined her next step of pursuing a Ph.D. in Health Policy and Management. She firmly believes that “the development of evidence-based policies will improve health outcomes, reduce health disparities, and pave the way for a more equitable healthcare system for everyone.”
Hope is coming in the Fall

Right now, all we could use a little hope. Thanks to the Barbara and Fred Kort Foundation, our Hope is coming this Fall.

She is 40 feet long, decked out in pink, and will be a traveling life saver to women and men from Panola to Matagorda Counties. Hope is joining our other mobile mammography coaches: Rosie and Mysty. And never has a new arrival been more welcomed!

We are teased about “naming” our coaches, but each has its own story and was made possible by different supporting patrons and the work they do is serious. Pre-COVID-19, the two coaches served over 8,000 patients annually.

The Rose’s Mobile Mammography Program is the most successful in the State. Our coaches travel farther, serve more women and have more collaborating partners than other programs. With our equal focus on serving the uninsured patients as well as the insured, plus comprehensive follow-up for every patient served, it is no wonder that our coaches are in high demand.

Pre-COVID, the two coaches were booked over 8,000 patients annually.

Mobile Mammography brings screening to women where they live, work and pray and fulfills our mission—access to care for all. Screening means early detection and that means life for so many of the patients we serve.

One of our biggest challenges has been serving people in rural areas of Central and East Texas. Serving patients at some of the sites meant traveling four hours to reach them, six hours to serve patients, then four hours to return to Houston. Add an hour for setup and another for close up and that meant for some long 16+ hour days. In the past, our staff would stay overnight, serving a community clinic in one county and moving to a different clinic in a nearby county the following day. Right now, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, staying overnight is not an option. So, we will be making multiple trips and we’ll do whatever is needed to serve those who need us the most.

COVID-19 has taken a big chunk out of our plans, but not our determination. We are not giving up and look forward to welcoming Hope into our family.

We did it together
COVID-19 didn't stop Employees from giving it their all

Every year the employees of The Rose show how exemplary they are, they volunteer at events, donate items for auctions, go the extra mile for patients and pitch in to help each other – but never has it been more visible than this past year.

Through difficult changes and sad endings, we came together as a family and stood by each other’s side (figuratively speaking of course). During our six week closure, employees uplifted each other with positive words as well as exchanging information about much needed resources. They shared stories about donating funds to help a homeless veteran into treatment, babysitting children of essential workers, volunteering at food drives or dropping off groceries at an elderly neighbor’s house.

One member of the Rose family went above and beyond during this time. For over eight years Chris Noble has provided community presentations at churches, businesses and for groups of every sort. As Director of Corporate and Community Relations, she had raised a lot of awareness as well as funds but COVID-19 brought her work to a standstill. Undaunted, she found another way to help.

As an accomplished artist, she created beautiful artwork of women and sold her paintings for $250, the cost of a mammogram. Next she painted crosses which sold out almost immediately. Pastor Davis of New Beginning Church ordered 20; one for each senior woman in his church. Altogether, Chris has created 150 pieces for her “Pandemic Art Project” and has raised over $10,000 for The Rose.

Even though she’s ready to be back giving presentations, she says she isn’t going to stop painting. “Because of this pandemic, so many more women will be in need of our services. Each painting I sell gives uninsured women the chance to beat cancer or find out she is cancer free. That is the sole purpose of why I do what I do,” shared Chris.

Thanks to Chris for not giving up and being an inspiration for all of us!
This year especially, the notes from our donors have meant almost as much as their gifts.

From Marian, who responded to our announcement that the temporary closure created a $3 million loss, came an amazing gift with these words:

“This pandemic is heart-breaking in so many ways, but for patients with breast cancer, time is of the essence — it just cannot wait! It can’t wait for the pandemic to be ‘over,’ it can’t wait for a job with insurance to come along — it just can’t wait.”

- Marian

Foundations were equally responsive. The Air Liquide Foundation in France was the first to check on us and funded over three months of personal protective equipment (PPE)—masks, gowns, face shields, gloves all in scarce supply and especially costly. Methodist Community Benefits was next followed closely behind by The George Foundation, then the Episcopal Health Foundation, United Way of Brazoria County, Houston Komen and so many others. Large or small, the emergency grants, the technology assistance, and all the resources were so appreciated.

They didn’t give up on The Rose so we CAN’T give up on helping those who need us most!

To all those individuals who dug deep to get us through this time and to those Foundations who knew our needs before we asked, we are so very grateful. Every gift was sorely needed, and every message treasured.

Doug reminded us:

“Please know that an angel is watching over you.”

- Doug

We believe him!

---

The Everything’s Coming Up Roses 2020 luncheon just wasn’t meant to be. First, it was postponed in March and then cancelled altogether in June. All were COVID-19 related decisions. Of course, we were disappointed! We had such exciting plans to recognize two amazing women, our honorees—Frances Arnoult and Jacque Ogilvie. We were delighted that Dr. Jennifer Litton had agreed to be our speaker and most of all, we were so looking forward to visiting with old and new friends.

We send our most profound appreciation to Luncheon Chair, Nancy Craig, who, along with her incredible committee, had already worked their magic, turning what could have been a disaster into a roaring success! Their work and dedication over many months was truly a labor of love.

Raising nearly $300,000 the 2020 luncheon ensured that those who turned to The Rose, the women and men most in need, would receive care. Considering that COVID-19 was disrupting healthcare services throughout the world and had sorely impacted The Rose, it was a minor miracle indeed!

On behalf of all those we have been able to serve, thank you to everyone who made the luncheon that never happened one of our history’s best events!

Honorees: Frances Arnoult & Jacque Ogilvie

---

They didn’t let us give up
The Rose is the only free standing non-hospital based facility to receive the “Breast Imaging Center of Excellence” award. This designation assures you that our organization, all equipment, technologists, physicians and processes have met the highest standards of care in breast imaging.

The Rose received both the “Platinum Seal of Transparency” from GuideStar and a 4-star rating from Charity Navigators, for our ongoing measures on providing transparency to our supporters.

These prestigious non-profit awards are given to organizations that voluntarily share measures of progress towards their mission, demonstrate an ongoing fiscal excellence and are positioned to achieve long-term change.

Breast Imaging Center of Excellence

The Rose is the only free standing non-hospital based facility to receive the “Breast Imaging Center of Excellence” award. This designation assures you that our organization, all equipment, technologists, physicians and processes have met the highest standards of care in breast imaging.
Charlie found a lump in his left breast while taking a shower. He had it checked out by his primary doctor, who told him the growth was definitely a fat deposit and nothing to worry about, but he wasn’t persuaded.

That’s when Charlie arranged a visit to The Rose with Dr. Dixie Melillo at his wife’s request, and soon after a mammogram and ultrasound indicated a malignancy. “I didn’t even know men could get breast cancer,” Charlie said.

Charlie’s wife, Annette, had seen her father take care of her mother through breast cancer and because of the pandemic, she said, it was heartbreaking not being able to be by her husband’s side during the whole treatment.

Now, as a male undergoing a mastectomy, Charlie has said that he has developed a new viewpoint on women battling breast cancer. He knows that he is part of a rare group, which give him more of a reason to encourage men to pay attention to their breast health.

Read more of our patient stories: www.therose.org/about-us/patient-stories/

“I didn’t even know men could get breast cancer”
- Charlie, Breast Cancer Survivor