

IASWG SPARC Project Report
Grant Period: January 11, 2021 - January 11, 2022

Organization: Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program

Total Grant Awarded: \$640.00

Project Leader: Angela Papalia LMSW, Assistant Director

The Adelphi NY Statewide Breast Cancer Hotline & Support Program (ABCP) was named a recipient of a 2021-2022 SPARC Grant for: “Cafecito: A Spanish-language support group for breast cancer patients.” The IASWG Board for SPARC Endorsement and Funding awarded the ABCP \$640.00, allowing the purchase of twenty-five VISA gift cards to provide to group members of Cafecito, in \$25.00 increments. These gift cards were distributed to the women, designated for the purchase of a light breakfast for each group that met, a tradition within this unique group. Without the SPARC grant, group members would not have received this amenity. The gift cards afforded the opportunity to address food insecurity, promote self-care and to honor the women in a simple, yet poignant way. To date, Cafecito remains the only professionally led, Spanish-language group on Long Island and maintains a steady referral stream from hospital systems across both counties.

Over the course of the grant cycle, while patients attempted to cope with the ever-changing COVID-19 Pandemic, the ABCP continued to provide comprehensive support groups to breast cancer patients throughout New York State and beyond, utilizing a HIPAA compliant tier of zoom to do so. Cafecito, an innovative support group for Spanish-speaking breast cancer patients, met twice monthly over the course of the grant cycle, taking a short break during the summer months. As the group members coped with both continued and new challenges brought on by the Pandemic (being immunocompromised, continued isolation, changes in their health status, to name just a few), the women looked towards the biweekly group to come together for support, camaraderie, and to find tools to help cope with life’s challenges. For the majority of group members, Cafecito remained a constant in an ever-changing landscape and provided comfort, peace and hope as they courageously faced both breast cancer and COVID.

The SPARC grant awarded to the ABCP was truly aligned with the mission statement of IASWG: to promote excellence in group work practice, education, field instruction, research and publication. Throughout the grant cycle. Cafecito increased exposure for the Breast Cancer Program’s MSW students, amplifying group work practice within the organization. Using Cafecito as a model for providing culturally sensitive, linguistically appropriate group work services, the group workers incorporated clinical techniques and interventions utilized within the group sessions during supervision with the students. The Adelphi Breast Cancer Program stands for advocacy and support, providing a safe space for all individuals to be supported, celebrated and respected, always striving to expand our breadth of knowledge and ability to be culturally humble.

The funding provided by the SPARC grant helped to enhance the current therapeutic group services provided to Spanish speaking breast cancer patients. The exposure of our unique initiative through our continued partnership with IASWG furthered our efforts in addressing unmet needs within both the context of group work, as well as within the Oncology community. As affiliates of numerous area hospitals and cancer initiatives in the community, our group workers continued to advocate on behalf of Spanish speaking and LEP (Limited English proficiency) patients, addressing barriers to care and health inequities.

Our own participant evaluations confirmed that the ABCP has been able to help patients mobilize through utilization of existing resources, develop new coping techniques and identify new sources of support. These interventions continue to enhance the quality of life for individuals diagnosed with breast cancer.

Patient Testimonial:

Ms. J. is a 49-year-old single, Spanish-speaking female, native of Guatemala. Ms. J. has lived on Long Island for over 10 years, where she has worked as a housekeeper for several families on the South Shore. In March 2021, Ms. J. was diagnosed with left invasive mammary cancer at Nassau University Medical Center (NUMC). She was referred to the Adelphi Breast Cancer Program by hospital staff after sharing that she was having a difficult time coping with her diagnosis.

“Hola senora Lois espero encuentre muy bien. Muchas gracias por las tarjetas. Me llegaron como caidas del cielo. Un fuerte abrazo a la distancia. Mil bendiciones !!!”

Translation: “Hello Mrs. Lois. I hope you are very well. Many thanks for the cards. They came to me like falling from the sky. A strong hug from a distance. A thousand blessings!!!”