

## Volunteer of the Year: Hurdle Jumpers Founder, Janet Halbert

*The Los Angeles Business Journal held its 19<sup>th</sup> annual Women Making a Difference Awards luncheon on May 25, 2010. The celebration honored over 230 Los Angeles based women who lead by example, successfully blending effective business vision with a passionate commitment to positively making a difference in the world of business and the communities they serve. Following is one of the nominating essays.*

In 2006, just recovered from her own breast cancer treatment, L.A. Management Consultant Janet Halbert founded a public charity in Los Angeles called “Hurdle Jumpers” to help others facing cancer. Hurdle Jumpers provides free “comfort kits” that Janet has lovingly and expertly designed -- based on her experience -- to help people soar over the obstacles of cancer treatment.



Janet (L) with longtime HJ Supporter Elise Spilker

Janet has been working overtime as Volunteer CEO of Hurdle Jumpers ever since -- on top of her day job as President of JRH Consulting Group, where she helps growing businesses solve management problems in accounting, operations and financial functions.

Janet’s mother died from breast cancer when Janet was only eleven. In 2004, at age 49— her mother’s age at her death—Janet was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. Like all new cancer patients, she felt overwhelmed, frightened and powerless. Overloaded with advice about what might help with treatment, she spent her diminishing energy finding and testing recommended products.

She often thought, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if everything a cancer patient might need came organized in a kit?” She learned that no such “kit” existed and resolved to meet this unmet need and help others with cancer begin the journey to wellness.

Using her experience as a patient, Janet designed the Hurdle Jumpers comfort kits to be filled with the information, products and tools people starting chemo and radiation need to anticipate and manage side effects, and be active in their own care.

Relying on her business skills, she engaged healthcare experts as advisors, persuaded nationally recognized companies to donate products, won seed capital, and enlisted a large corps of community volunteers at

Hurdle Jumpers to make sure comfort kits would be free to patients starting treatment.

No one else provides anything like Janet’s comprehensive comfort kit, leaving every cancer patient to reinvent the wheel. The kits include information about day-to-day issues arising during chemo and radiation, survival tips, products known to ease side effects, custom-designed relaxation CDs, humor books and other supportive tools – all beautifully packaged in a special tote. Each kit is personalized with a note telling recipients their kit was designed by another cancer patient, and lovingly assembled by volunteers.

Cancer patients receiving the kits are often moved to tears by the thought and care taken in creating them, and by the many facets of healing and well being they encompass. Patients tell Janet they feel understood and empowered by receiving their kit and realizing they are not alone in their journey.

It seems shocking that so simple, yet complete, a cancer patient resource failed to exist before Janet created it. Perhaps others had thought of it. But it is Janet, with her tenacity, generosity, smarts, skills and indomitable spirit who made it possible.

Out of her own cancer ordeal, Janet created a unique, life-affirming gift that helps people dealing with a cancer diagnosis to conserve their energy and focus on getting well. She is an example to survivors of cancer and other diseases that one person can take action that makes a difference for others. As she puts it, she decided to take the lemons of her cancer diagnosis and make a lemon meringue pie.



Halbert accepts Volunteer of the Year Award from LABJ Publisher, Matt Toledo (L)

To make a donation or for more information:

[www.hurdlejumper.org](http://www.hurdlejumper.org)

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