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**CLOTHES OFFER CHEMO COMFORT**

**Sisters' firm fashions outfits for breast cancer survivors**

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Breast cancer, a double mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiation would be tough for any woman to endure. But for Katherine Adams, the experience was transformative, inspiring her to launch a new business that will help others going down the same path.

Adams, a Los Gatos resident, and her sister, Susan Baxter of Carmel Valley, have formed a line of clothing made with breast cancer patients in mind. Their Confident Clothing Co., headquartered in Carmel Valley, sells caps and comfortable tops, pants and capri pants.

It's clothing with a few very important differences, though. Because Adams, 52, had been through all of breast cancer treatment's indignities, she knew exactly what was needed.

"They send you home with all these drains, and no suggestions on what to do with them," said Adams.

So her Cool Chemo Tops have special channel guides and buttoned-in pockets within to hold the drains, which draw off excess lymphatic fluid that accumulates after a mastectomy. Once the drains are no longer needed, the pockets can be easily removed.

"It was a really easy solution to the dreadful drains," said Baxter, 60. "There's nothing else like it on the market."

**Specific needs**

The genesis of all this was Adams' diagnosis of stage III breast cancer in May 2006. A fitness coach for 13 years, she was determined to exercise as much as she could during her treatment. But the cotton caps available for chemo patients made her head sweat.

"I cut up some



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Sisters Susan Baxter, left, and Kathy Adams of Confident Clothing Co.... (DAVID ROYAL/The Herald)

exercise clothing, and a girlfriend sewed it into caps for me," said Adams, whose improvised caps allowed her to work out in comfort.

Adams realized that breast cancer patients had other specific clothing needs that weren't being met, leading to her Cool Chemo line of clothing.

Because all the items are made of a material that wicks moisture away from the body, they're ideal for exercise or for making patients more comfortable if they are subject to hot flashes, a common side effect of surgery and chemotherapy. The smooth material is easier on sensitive areas healing after surgery.

The pants have elastic waistbands, and the tops button in the front, which makes them easy to put on or remove, important for people who are recovering from procedures.

In addition, the tops are styled so it's not obvious if mastectomy patients are wearing a prosthesis or

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not.

"This gives the option of whether to wear it. ... I hated those things," said Adams, who has since had reconstructive surgery.

The clothing is suited to anyone with limited mobility, or conditions like multiple sclerosis or Parkinson's disease,

because of its easy-access features. The clothing is offered in black and navy, and more colors are planned for the future. The caps come in several different color combinations.

Because of Adams' background in fitness, it was important for her to have clothing she could exercise in.

"I knew that exercise would help not only physically, but also mentally" during treatment, said Adams, who wants to develop an exercise program for breast cancer patients.

Even while she was undergoing chemo, she still managed to run the Big Sur Half Marathon. She's planning to do it again this year.

Beyond that, though, Adams wants the clothing to be fashionable and feminine.

"We're now in the process of trademarking and patenting the clothing," said Baxter.

#### Sister steps in

Baxter got involved after it was obvious that Adams' desire to launch the business was exceeding her energy level.

The sisters, who come from a family of seven siblings, have always been close.

"I needed a way of helping," said Baxter, adding that she felt helpless watching her sister go through the medical procedures. "It just made perfect sense to me."

Baxter became the company's vice president of sales and marketing, in addition to her day job with Coldwell Banker in Carmel. Adams is founder and president.

There was a lot to figure out. It was important to them to find material made in the United States, as well as a U.S. manufacturer. They had to develop a Web site with the capability to take orders ([www.confidentclothingcompany.com](http://www.confidentclothingcompany.com)) and needed to get the word out to doctors and other medical professionals.

The response so far has been enthusiastic among those they've talked to, including oncologists and plastic surgeons. They have a board of advisers that gives input. They've involved other cancer patients, like Erin O'Connor Morrison of Carmel, a two-time breast cancer survivor who models their clothing for the Web site and brochure.

The sisters are dealing with health insurance companies, trying to convince them that the clothing is considered therapeutic garments and are a necessary medical expense that should be covered. Medicare and a number of other insurance providers are willing to pay for two therapeutic garments a year.

Cost of the clothing items ranges from \$29.95 for the caps to \$129.95 for the chemo top.

The company is about to ship its first orders, fittingly during the end of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Baxter points out that 211,000 women are diagnosed each year with breast cancer, and although medical researchers are closer to finding a cure, it still is elusive.

"I really wanted to help other women go through the journey more easily than I did," said Adams. "That's really important to me."

To see the Confident Clothing Co. line, go to [www.confidentclothingcompany.com](http://www.confidentclothingcompany.com)

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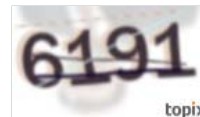
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