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## NORTH BAY CANCER ALLIANCE COMPLETES 1<sup>ST</sup> ASCENT ON CANCER

*An Extreme Hike Raising Critical Funds for Cancer Patients*

**Santa Rosa, CA** – North Bay Cancer Alliance (NBCA), the only cancer-focused nonprofit providing patient assistance to cancer patients at every hospital and oncology center in Sonoma, Marin, Napa, Lake, and Mendocino counties, is pleased to report its successful completion of the first *Ascent on Cancer* hike.

This was the first in a series of extreme hikes undertaken with two goals in mind. The first goal was to raise critical funds for North Bay cancer patients and their families who are living on the margin of health and income. The second was to provide donors the opportunity to submit the names of Cancer Heroes in their lives who were taken symbolically up the mountain.

Kent Corley, NBCA Executive Director, reported that, “Everything went to plan. The mountain gave us all we could ask for. It was as challenging as advertised and we chose a spectacular day to put our bodies on the line for cancer patients.” See the film Trailer here: <https://www.northbaycancer.org/donate-to-ascent-on-cancer/>. The event took place on November 13, 2021.

Mt. San Jacinto in Palm Springs, CA, is the steepest escarpment in the continental United States and entails almost 11,000 feet of elevation gain. Towering over Palm Springs, the mountain is home to the world-renowned Palm Springs Aerial Tramway which was used to return the hikers back to the desert floor.

The teams making up the ascent included Kent and Eileen Corley, *Ascent on Cancer* founders, their son-in-law Joseph Birkenes, all Santa Rosa residents, along with two Palm Springs area residents David Stewart and Steve Finch, both Coachella Valley hiking veterans. Two videographers, Colin Lomax and Steven Mackey rounded out the teams and filmed the adventure.

“Cancer can be a herculean disease to manage and afford. The hike was very challenging physically, yet it’s nothing compared to the daily struggles of a family confronted with cancer,” said Kent. “To me the mountain represents the cancer experience. We wanted to put all those Cancer Heroes on our backs and symbolically take them up with us and honor their fight, their survival, their memory, or their work in the field of oncology.”

“I hike a lot,” says Steve Finch, “But what made this climb unique and powerful was the idea that we hiked as a team, and that the dialogue among us was all about cancer and its impact on all our lives. And, more importantly, that we can do something about it to help others. The metaphor of hiking this particular, very challenging trail juxtaposed with the struggle I remember when cancer was in my

family, knowing that millions of people are struggling with it today as patients and family members of patients, was an important lesson. Even if cancer isn't front and center for you right now, it is for someone, and it likely will be for you in the future; so be part of a team, be part of the fight. Let's all make fighting cancer less difficult for everyone."

NBCA provides critical financial support to cancer patients and their families in the North Bay regardless where they are being treated or what kind of cancer they have. Patients can use the money for transportation, co-pays, grocery, lodging, or any essential needs they have. Corley observed, "Lengthy applications, financial status verification, and long wait times can discourage applicants or take too long to be effective. NBCA has instead opted for an approach that puts money in the hands of oncology social workers and patient navigators to distribute to patients on-the-spot, at the moment when it is needed."

Chemotherapy and radiation are two good examples of why it is so difficult for cancer patients living on the margin of health and income. These treatments require patients to be physically present at an oncology center sometimes every day for two to three weeks straight. That might mean driving from Clearlake to Santa Rosa every day or from Santa Rosa to San Francisco, a 100 mile round trip. That's expensive even if the patient has insurance and a working vehicle. NBCA financial support helps these patients stay in treatment.

The inspiration for *Ascent on Cancer* comes from a longstanding desire on the part of Kent Corley and his wife Eileen to attempt the Skyline Trail hike, ranked as one of the five most challenging day hikes in the country. While the hike itself is complete NBCA will continue the fundraiser through the end of the year.

Corporate sponsors and individuals donors are still needed. NBCA is about halfway to its \$30,000 goal. The *Ascent on Cancer* film is now in editing and all donors can still receive recognition in the film for donations made through December 31<sup>st</sup>. See the film trailer here: <https://www.northbaycancer.org/donate-to-ascent-on-cancer/>. To download and use the Trailer click here: <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/658182480>.

All money raised will go directly to helping North Bay cancer patients and their families. Individuals who wish to support cancer patients can either go to [www.northbaycancer.org](http://www.northbaycancer.org) and make a tax-deductible donation, or they can go to the Ascent on Cancer GoFundMe page <https://gofund.me/d7e83904> to make a tax-deductible donation.

For background on the Skyline Trail visit: <https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/2015/07/30/skyline-trail-palm-springs/30886951/>

*Celebrating its sixteenth year supporting cancer patients and their families in the North Bay, North Bay Cancer Alliance is an independent community resource, not affiliated with any hospital or medical group, providing a direct path to local cancer resources and information as well as financial support for cancer patients who cannot afford to pay. We are here not just for cancer patients, but also their families, friends and caregivers. Nonprofit Tax ID # 01-0821673.*



Mount San Jacinto

The Ascent on Cancer team on Mount San Jacinto.

