

# Shoppe on Fifth

By Sandra R. Pinkerton, Ed.D.

Photography by Rebecca Shavulsky



Sandra Pinkerton, member of the Women's Health Care Task Force, is greeted by store assistant Marleny Melillo at the Lazur Shoppe on Fifth at Hackensack University Medical Center.

**S**tepping off the hospital elevator bank, the brightly lit store front beckons one to enter the shop. It is the Ellen H. Lazar Shoppe on Fifth at Hackensack University Medical Center.

The store, located at Suite 505, offers a wide variety of items for women with mastectomies. They include post-surgical bras, camisoles, swimwear, breast prostheses, cranial prostheses, partial bangs and

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*for Women  
with Disabilities*

**SPECIAL  
EDITION**

# The Shoppe on Fifth

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Angie Huelbig (L), a 20-year survivor of breast cancer, consults with Constance Niclas at the Hackensack University Medical Center. BELOW: A lightweight silicone prosthesis.

hoops of hair for complete or partial hair loss, non-metallic deodorant and skin care products for people undergoing radiation therapy, lymphedema sleeves and gauntlets, and incontinence products.

Also offered for sale are educational books, CDs, tapes, videos, gift items, and decorative canes. There are items for children and adults.

One of the important aspects of this specialty store is the ability of the person to shop in a more private atmosphere with trained staff who understand their individual equipment and special clothing needs.

The main thrust behind this store is the supervisor, Constance M. Niclas, a Board Certified Mastectomy Fitter whose out-going personality and knowledge adds to the buying experience. Ms. Niclas has special training how to assist women with mastectomy needs that are in seated positions and those who are aging.

These women have special needs and require different accommodations than persons who are able to walk without

any assistance. Their shoulders tend to roll forward which presents unique fitting needs for any type of prosthesis. Ms. Niclas is one of the few people in the nation who has special training in this area and is a speaker for many major prosthetic and orthotic organizations.

She is a graduate of the Fashion Institute of Technology of New York and is currently completing her Master's degree from Seton Hall University. She is a life-long resident of New Jersey and currently lives in Bergen County.

Ms. Niclas' interest in disability issues began many years ago when she helped with a special needs fashion show at a Disabled Awareness Day with the Bergen County Office on Disability Services at the Garden State Plaza. She

also wrote a research paper on wellness and health.

On a personal level, her father-in-law had multiple sclerosis.

Ms. Niclas sees several hundred women

a year who have had cancer or other diseases requiring partial or full removal of one or both breasts. These women have bra measurements from 32AA to 46DDD





A variety of bras on display at the Shoppe on Fifth along with a book on Lymphedema, a condition that causes swelling most often in the arms and legs, and occasionally in other parts of the body.

with one client needing a size that had to be specialty ordered. Many of them function with canes and walkers, with a few using wheelchairs for mobility.

Bra preference, lifestyle, medical needs, movement and emotional issues all have to be considered when fitting for prosthesis. The silicone prosthesis is closest to the natural touch of the real breast. The forms can be an entire form to a partial form for those who have had a lumpectomy. The proper measurements are taken by a Certified Mammography Specialist (CMS).

This is especially important for those individuals who wear spinal orthotics and have to have the top half of the breast filled with the prosthesis.

One of Niclas' most professionally challenging cases concerned a woman with muscular dystrophy. That condition caused her to have rounded shoulders that made it much more difficult to

adhere to the strict breast health essential for her post-operative cancer care. The breast area has no muscle and that meant the pressure surface had to be precisely identified in the fitting process and follow-up.

Her youngest client was a teenager with Paget's Disease. To date Niclas has not seen many teens, although nation-

For more information about the service and the program, contact the Medical Center (201-996-3720), the Shoppe at Fifth (201-996-4400), or visit the website [www.humed.com/lazarshoppe](http://www.humed.com/lazarshoppe)

ally the number of teenagers having lumpectomy and mastectomy is rising.

The small silicone prosthesis, which costs \$289, fits snugly into the bras, camisoles, swimwear, etc. It is not covered by insurance, which causes a problem for many people.

The prosthesis needs to be changed every two years. Because it is close to the body its position and “fit” changes periodically as a woman’s

body goes through the natural changes associated with repeated movements and aging. The prosthesis needs to be washed with mild soap each night and left to dry. The prosthesis has a warranty of two years.

The Lazar Shoppe on Fifth also carries arm bands for those with lymphedema, a condition where the arms and hands can swell after a woman has been treated for breast cancer. The Shoppe

carries books, tapes and other information concerning this side effect of cancer.

Referrals to certified fitters are made by doctors, community agencies, and through guest speaking. Marleny Melillo, CMF, staff assistant, who complements the work done at the Shoppe at Fifth, speaks Spanish and does outreach to the Hispanic community. The Shoppe covers the tri-state region with 18.2 percent of the population



Store assistant Marleny Melillo shows a turban to Sandra Pinkerton.



A camisole to wear under a sheer garment.

of Hispanic origin.

The Foundation of Hackensack University Medical Center created the Shoppe at Fifth to meet a number of patient's needs in one setting. They formed a support group to meet psychosocial needs. The group also provides information, such as help to find ways to pay for a prosthesis.

Everyone connected to the Shoppe—the fitters, the staff, volunteers, medical personnel from the hospital and those in the support group—provide services that last way beyond surgery and discharge. The Shoppe continues to offer help to patients in a comfortable, private environment that brightens the lives of women living with cancer and other diseases. ■



A swimsuit, custom fit to hold prostheses, on display at the Lazur Shoppe on Fifth.

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## Upcoming Events

As a follow-up to last year's successful conference, "Partners in Wellness: Working Together to Promote Equality in Health Care for Women with Disabilities", this year we are offering free seminars titled *Living Life to the Fullest*.

The first seminar will be held in July in Camden County. The topics chosen are Living Positively with Mental Health Issues and Improving Health Literacy. We are pleased to be partnering with Cooper University Hospital's Community Health Affairs Department to make this

available to women with disabilities and to health care professionals.

Cooper University Hospital is a leading provider of women's health services in South Jersey.

A second seminar will be held in the fall in North Jersey. It will also address Living Positively with Mental Health Issues, paired with a presentation on Adopting a Healthy Lifestyle.

A flier describing the events and a registration form will be mailed to each subscriber of *Health Access*. Details will also be posted on our web site: [www.njcdd.org/womenshealth.htm](http://www.njcdd.org/womenshealth.htm)

*for Women with Disabilities*

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