

HOPE QUARTERLY

Sharing the stories and celebrating the work of the Georgian Bay Cancer Support Centre

MARCH 2024

MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR

As we start another year, I would like to thank all our donors for supporting the important work being done at the Georgian Bay Cancer Support Centre (GBCSC).

The membership at the Centre has increased by over 40 per cent this past year and we are currently providing support to 300-plus members. The number of programs and services offered to members has increased significantly and more and more people are utilizing our GAP Fund to cover costs related to accessing cancer treatment outside of our region.

We have recently expanded to the Collingwood area and are currently offering a men's, women's and caregivers' support group to people impacted by cancer in this underserved region.

The generosity of our donors has allowed us to meet this increased demand for our programs and services. This year, we are focused on continuing to promote awareness within our community so that we can reach everyone who needs the support that the GBCSC provides.



We are truly grateful for your ongoing support.

Kathy Wolfer

MEMBERSPEAK

The GBCSC offers those impacted by cancer support close to home. How has this local support made a difference to you?



"Truly blessed to have the Cancer Support Centre within a 10-minute drive from my home. It has given me the motivation to get up every morning to partake in one of many programs/services they provide."

Laura McClung



"The GBCSC offers me a local group setting to meet others going through similar situations as I have. I can offer some advice and counsel those that are new to the 'cancer system' that's often terrifying at first. Knowing others are going through what you have, helps alleviate the burden. I have often been inspired by the strength of those who are 'battling'."

Brian Zandbelt



"My discovery of the GBCSC close to home has provided me with new friendships, amazing support, programs I enjoy, and freedom from fear of that word CANCER! You'll agree if you check them out!"

Bev Pitfield

FOR SALE ON GEORGIAN BAY SUPPORTS THE GBCSC

Helping Those Who Need it Most



“We feel that being an example of stewardship in the fight against cancer is important. We are there to fight for those who can’t and love and support those who need us most in their fight against cancer.”

That’s how For Sale on Georgian Bay Real Estate partner Kelly Earle describes their support of the GBCSC. Along with her fellow owner/partners Eric Beutler and Shelby Greenlaw, the firm wanted to partner with the Centre as another way to give back to the people they live and work with in the community. After meeting with GBCSC volunteers, they became aware of the many services and programs provided to those impacted by cancer locally.

“Seeing the hard work and dedication they exemplify in our community encouraged us to partner with the GBCSC to help,” adds Eric.

Helping out all year long

The For Sale on Georgian Bay team supported the Centre’s work in many ways this past year. Initially, they sponsored the GBCSC’s new 50/50 Raffle, which is now becoming a growing part of the Centre’s fundraising efforts. Team members also organized special fundraisers including face painting during the Butter Tart Festival and sold hot chocolate at the Santa Claus Parade.

The firm regularly encourages its team members to seek out opportunities to help in the community. Every year as part of their Brokerage, Keller Williams Experience Realty, it promotes a day of community service, Red Day. Last May team members helped with the GBCSC front garden revitalization project.

Painting the Town Pink

The connection to support local causes goes back many years for Kelly. She helped run the Relay for Life in Penetanguishene for nine years where she met

many people impacted by cancer. The firm decided in its first year to mark Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

“All of our signs on our client’s properties, our website, and all advertising changes from our normal blue to pink. A portion of our sales for the month is donated to the Canadian Cancer Society. Last year we split that amount between them and the GBCSC,” explains Kelly.

For Sale on Georgian Bay team also helped to paint, decorate, and sell over 250 pink and lavender pumpkins in support of the GBCSC this past October. Their entire office entrance was filled with bedazzled pumpkins.



Everyone touched by cancer

For Sale on Georgian Bay has a team of 17 individuals consisting of agents and administration staff. Kelly, Eric, and Shelby admit their entire team has seen cancer touch their immediate families, friends, and colleagues.

“We’ve all lost someone close to us to cancer,” says Shelby.

Taking the time to care

The team at For Sale on Georgian Bay is dedicated to helping the whole community. That’s why it was important to support the GBCSC, according to Eric.

“By volunteering our time and efforts we hope to encourage others in the community to demonstrate kindness, compassion and understanding for others. Always take time to care, volunteer, and donate.”

Our GBCSC members are truly thankful that For Sale on Georgian Bay cares.

CAREGIVERS' SUPPORT GROUP

A Safe Place for Those Who Care for Others

When Nancy Howe's husband was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, she found her role as a caregiver overwhelming. She realized she needed support. The Centre's Caregivers' Support Group offered what she was looking for.

"I was uncomfortable at my first session until the sharing started. It didn't take long to feel like I was in the right place," recalls Nancy. "When the other members shared their experience, strength and hope, this reassured me that I wasn't alone and I could reach out for help whenever I needed it."

The GBCSC launched the Caregivers' Support Group in early 2023 to provide caregivers like Nancy a place to share with others on the same journey. Program Facilitator Cheryl Moore points out the current health care model is focused on "the patient". Caregivers, who serve many important roles in a patient's cancer journey, often get forgotten.

"Caregivers and their emotions and needs are overlooked. They in turn, in an effort to protect their loved one, also put their own emotions and needs on the back burner."

The bi-weekly program welcomes a mixed group either living with a person who has cancer or participating in their care. It provides a safe space to allow caregivers to focus on themselves and how they are coping.

Cheryl admits she's amazed at how much gets done in one hour. She always checks-in with everyone to find out how they are feeling and coping. It can be a vulnerable time for many attending for the first time. The key is let them know it's a welcoming space.



Cheryl Moore
Seen here leading a recent Caregivers' Support Group

"They appreciate the confidential space to speak freely about their emotions, and to receive support and validation from others who are experiencing similar issues," says Cheryl.

She adds a support network is crucial for caregivers who can often burnout, especially if a family member is dealing with a long cancer. "The longer the acute stage of care continues, the more taxing it is on both the person with cancer and their loved ones."

Karen Hodgson and her husband are a good example of how a long cancer journey is difficult for patient and caregiver. She found herself coming to the GBCSC looking for support after her husband David began his recovery journey from cancer. He was first diagnosed in 2009.

"A caregiver is what I had become full time. I recognized that I had stress, sleepless nights, and fatigue from this," says Karen.

Karen has found the group is open and honest about challenges each faces as well as sharing fears, hopes, and gratitude. "The group offers me continuous support, practical coping strategies, a safe space to vent fears or frustrations, and sometimes the opportunity to share perspectives that others may find helpful."

Thank You for Your Support... It Made a Difference in 2023

89	90	104	53	\$15,723⁷⁹
New Members	Counselling Sessions Facilitated	Hours of Group Support	Monthly Program Sessions	GAP Funds Distributed

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL



WITH MICHAEL & LOIS BLAIS

GBCSC provides couple with hope during a difficult journey

Michael and Lois Blais ten years ago did something that many people do – retired and relocated to the beautiful shores of Georgian Bay. Michael recalls enjoying many walks together throughout their new community. They often would go by and see the new home of the GBCSC under construction and felt proud their new community offered support to those impacted by cancer. Three years later they would turn to the GBCSC for support.

Incredibly welcoming

Lois was experiencing abdominal pain in 2022. It was later determined that she had colon cancer, a chronic form of leukemia, and skin cancer. Michael said from day one the Centre offered the hope they needed during a very challenging and scary time.

“The first time we walked into the Centre we found that not only was it beautiful, but that it was also incredibly welcoming. We immediately felt as if the ensuing journey would be understood and accepted.”

Finding light on a dark journey

Since becoming members, the couple has taken advantage of many of the Centre’s support programs and services. Lois has availed herself of counselling, massage, and reiki. Michael has been a regular participant in the Caregivers’ Support Program.

“What the GBCSC has done for us is to light up what would surely have been an otherwise dark journey. People in our daily lives didn’t always know how to react but that was not the case at the Centre,” says Lois.

Support as a caregiver

The GBCSC has provided support for Lois and Michael but in different ways. Michael has benefited greatly from the Caregivers’ Support Program (see full story on page 3).

“Attending the sessions I realized that there were issues specific to caregivers and that I wasn’t alone in my personal experience with Lois,” he explains. “A sounding board was being provided through shared experiences.”

Michael for a period also acted as facilitator of the bi-weekly sessions. He found playing that role allowed him to experience the process in greater depth.

Emotional support key to healing

Both Lois and Michael would highly recommend the GBCSC to anyone impacted by cancer. To them, what the Centre offers is complementary to other services and supports provided by health/medical providers.

“The emotional support is as important as anything else in healing when fighting cancer,” says Lois.



Members: *Michael & Lois Blais*
Home Community: *Penetanguishene*
Members Since: *January 2023*



*Georgian Bay
Cancer Support Centre*

The mission of the Georgian Bay Cancer Support Centre is to provide emotional, physical, social, spiritual support, education and information as a complement to the medical system for people living with cancer, their families and caregivers.

#840027205RR0001 Georgian Bay Cancer Support Centre is a federally incorporated charity.