

HOPE QUARTERLY

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

JANUARY 2025

MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR

As we enter a new year, I would like to thank you for your ongoing support and generosity over the past year.



Our annual Paint the Town Pink campaign exceeded expectations raising over \$30,000, which included the sale of 300 pumpkins and 200 dozen cookies. The campaign received significant support from For Sale on Georgian Bay (Lead Community Partner) and a generous donation from community partner Poppy & Peonies.

During the Season of Giving many of you made generous gifts to help those facing cancer. This support is so important to help us provide much-needed programs and services.

The GBCSC is now looking ahead as we develop a new strategic plan to guide our important work over the coming years. Our Board will also be evolving in early 2025 as we welcome new members and say farewell to others. On a personal note, I will be leaving the Board after four years (two as Chair).

Wishing you and your families a wonderful 2025 and sincerely thank you again for supporting the GBCSC.

Kathy Wolfer

MEMBERSPEAK

A cancer diagnosis can be expensive. How has the GBCSC helped you cope with those costs?



"In 2003, my husband was diagnosed with stage 4 small cell lung cancer. That year, we had more than 95 visits to RVH. The cost was taking a toll on us. The GBCSC was kind enough to offer us compensation for our future appointments. It took so much stress off for us. I can't begin to say how much of a godsend this is to us."

Lisa Robitaille

"The Support Centre has helped me tremendously over the past few years, especially due to the cost of living today and over the COVID period. It has helped me so much by providing gas cards for my appointments in Barrie, Mississauga, and Sudbury. I can't thank this place enough! I'm so very grateful and appreciate everything the GBCSC does for all of us!"



Jennifer Charlebois



"My 11-year-old son Trytin was diagnosed with Ewing Sarcoma. It's been very difficult emotionally and financially. There isn't much government funding for people who are fighting cancer. Your facility has allowed myself and Trytin to concentrate on his treatment and relieved a lot of stress due to bills that I wouldn't have been able to pay without your generous support."

Chris Charlebois

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM OFFERS MEMBERS A CHANCE TO GIVE BACK AND CONNECT WITH OTHERS



Volunteers are a huge part of what makes the GBCSC possible. Like all not-for-profits, our volunteers are the lifeblood of what we do every day for our members impacted by cancer. Many may not realize but a large portion of our volunteer team are themselves members, 32 of them or 33% of the entire volunteer team. Their experience getting support from the GBCSC has inspired many to give back for the help they've received.

Most of these member volunteers are still actively dealing with their cancer diagnosis though a few are now cancer-free. These volunteers engage in everything from acting as front desk ambassadors, bingo, Cooking for Cancer and Soup for the Soul, administration, gardening, fundraising events, community outreach, and so much more.

Angela Lee Harrison, Volunteer and Member Services Coordinator, notes volunteers who help at the GBCSC come from various backgrounds and experiences. Those who are facing cancer or have overcome it offer a unique perspective as volunteers.

For GBCSC members who volunteer, a big motivator is the need to give back for what they've received on their journey.

“The generosity and compassion that shines through these individuals lights the way for so many others who are struggling to find their bearings and serves as a means of hope and encouragement,” explains Angela. “These volunteers help to create a safe sanctuary and united front to face cancer straight on.”

Trisha Sheridan felt a sense of belonging from the first time she walked into the Home of Hope.

“The kindness of the people, the excellent programs, and the warm welcome I received have made every visit since then a truly uplifting experience. Inspired by my own positive experiences, I wanted to give back. One way I’ve been able to do that is as a volunteer.”

John Bowles recalls he was drawn to the kitchen area when he first became a member. For him, it made a lot of sense to share his culinary background and help out with the Cooking for Cancer program and Soup for the Soul.

“The kitchen is my happy place. It’s nice to take all the things I’ve learned in my life, and share this knowledge with others at the Centre.”

For Laura McClung, volunteering has been a self-rewarding experience that allowed her to give back by simply offering her time.

“Volunteering has given me an opportunity to make new relationships with like-minded people who are passionate about making a difference.”



GBCSC HAS A SPECIAL PLACE IN THE HEART OF LOCAL SUPPORTER

Cancer survivor Denise McIntaggart gives back through her family businesses to support others impacted by the disease

Denise McIntaggart along with her husband Michael are the owners and operators of two well-known local businesses, Café Kittyhawk and History Barbershop Co. The businesses have supported numerous GBCSC fundraising efforts, including the 2024 Georgian Bay Cycle for Hope and October's Paint the Town Pink campaign. Denise and Michael also give monthly as members of the Heroes of Hope Giving Team. Denise admits the GBCSC has a special place in her heart.



support during her cancer journey when she was battling cancer.

"I realized that community support is not merely nice to have, it is essential. It provided a place for people to talk to, get support on tough days, a comforting hug when I was feeling down, and even a hot meal when I felt weak," recalls Denise. "The Centre offers guided, tried, and true ways so community support is there for you when you need it most."

"My support for the Centre began long before my personal journey with cancer. Like many compassionate individuals, I have always felt a deep empathy for those affected by cancer and have grieved alongside my community for the devastating impacts it has on people's lives."

A profound connection

Denise, a lifelong Penetanguishene resident, faced her own tough fight with cancer. But her initial contact with GBCSC dates back to 2010. She began to craft bracelets to honour loved ones who had bravely faced cancer. It was during this time that she met Sandy Cornell, who was in the process of opening the GBCSC.

"Our shared commitment to supporting those affected by cancer led to a profound connection. I was honored to have my efforts recognized on her Angels Wall inside the old Penetanguishene General Hospital location, a place that held personal significance as my uncle Michael had devoted many years there as a compassionate nurse."

Community support essential

Denise truly understood how important it was to have

Her personal experiences with the GBCSC reaffirmed her commitment to support the Centre to this day.

Rewarding to provide help

Denise and Michael have proudly supported the GBCSC in various ways over the years. Along with financial support as sponsors and monthly donors, they've provided numerous gifts-in-kind for raffle prizes for fundraising efforts. Denise has also helped as a volunteer on events like the Strawberry Tea fundraisers.

"Supporting the GBCSC is deeply rewarding, and we are honored to play a part in its mission to provide care and community to those affected by cancer," adds Denise.

Denise is committed to GBCSC due to her personal experiences and the desire to uplift the community.

"By continuing to support the Centre, I aim to ensure that others facing similar challenges have access to the same vital support network that made such a difference in my life."

Did You Know...

The GBCSC's Heroes of Hope Giving Team currently has 37 supporters. They collectively give **over \$2,400 monthly and close to \$29,000 annually**. This ongoing and predictable funding ensures support is there as soon as someone impacted in our community needs it.

Thank You!

UP CLOSE & PERSONAL *with*

GBCSC Provided Emotional Support Deanna Needed

Like so many facing cancer, Deanna Sinnige found her diagnosis came “out of the blue” when told she had stage four cervical cancer that had spread to her bladder in late 2020.

“I was scared. Our girls were only nine and 11. I was determined I was going to beat this thing so that I would be around for our girls.”

She received immediate aggressive treatment to deal with her cancer at Princess Margaret Hospital and Royal Victoria Hospital.

Struggled after treatments

Deanna admits the biggest challenges for her happened after her treatments were completed.

“I started to have long-term side effects to all of the aggressive cancer treatment that I received and needed medical attention for that.”

As a teacher, she also struggled both emotionally and mentally as schools continued to be closed in fall 2021. It was her husband Jason who reached out to the GBCSC to help her get support at a low time.

“Many people don’t realize that once a cancer survivor completes treatment, that their cancer journey is far from over,” explains Deanna. *“A cancer diagnosis will forever change you both mentally and emotionally. And you won’t be the same person you were before that diagnosis.”*

A place to heal emotionally

Initially, she found the Journey of Hope group made a big difference for her during a difficult time.

“I was able to join some other cancer survivors and cancer patients that were still undergoing medical care. We were at varying points in our journeys, but we could all relate to each other. I found that group helpful.”

DEANNA SINNIGE

Home Community: *Phelpstou*
Member Since: *2021*



She has also accessed the GBCSC’s one-on-one counselling to work through emotional challenges and to work towards healing on different levels beyond the physical aspect.

Formed lasting friendships

For her, the GBCSC has had a huge impact on her cancer journey.

“I had the support group to lean on. I had one-on-one counselling. I ended up joining the card-making group here at the Centre. I’ve not only made several beautiful cards, but I have become friends with some other members here who have been a great comfort to me. I feel these friendships, will stick around long term.”

A support in the community

Deanna says it also makes a big difference to have a place nearby to provide support when you need it.

“Having the support of the Centre here in the community allows me to attend programs and connect with others more easily than if I were to travel a distance. I also feel the size is small enough that I feel a very personal connection to it, but the Centre does offer so many different things.”



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.

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