

HOPE QUARTERLY

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

2026 - ISSUE 2



YOGA FOR BREAST CANCER OFFERS A PEACEFUL SUPPORT COMMUNITY

Breast cancer continues to be among the top cancers facing Georgian Bay Cancer Support Centre (GBCSC) members. It's one of the factors behind the launch of a new program last fall, Yoga for Breast Cancer. Member Amanda Barnstaple decided to take her experience with breast cancer and as a yoga teacher to support others facing the same cancer challenge.

"Considering my own journey with breast cancer, I also wanted to share the benefits of yoga from a place of personal experience."

Amanda, who has practiced yoga since her teen years, became a certified yoga instructor in her 20s. Following her diagnosis, she realized how valuable her yoga training would be.

"I find that I am practicing yoga more than ever to support my health and well-being on this journey."

Amanda explains yoga can be a very gentle way to regain mobility and strength but also helps to manage stress, anxiety, depression, insomnia, and fatigue. The classes (offered at the GBCSC in Penetanguishene and virtually to those who cannot attend in person) provide an opportunity for gathering with others who are familiar with the ups and downs of cancer.

The class is very peaceful. Participants are encouraged

to tune in and listen to what they need. Modifications and variations are provided so that everyone can work at their own comfort level. A typical class includes deep breathing, gentle self-massage, stretches for the upper body, poses to help with balance, and gratitude practice to conclude.

"Feeling the support of the earth under our feet, feeling the support of other members in the class, and feeling the support from the Centre can give us the foundation that we need so that we can continue to grow."

For those who attend, "community" is a big draw, according to Amanda. "Definitely community. Participants have commented that they really enjoy being in the class and sharing the experience together."

To date, a core group of members attend regularly. Many have shared with Amanda they feel great and much more relaxed after a class.

"I sometimes try to talk myself out of leaving my house, but every time I make it to yoga, I am always very happy I did attend," says Carolyn Scanlon.

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MEMBERSPEAK

As a caregiver of someone fighting cancer, how has the GBCSC supported you during this often difficult and challenging journey?

The GBCSC supports individuals fighting cancer as well as their caregivers. We asked some of our caregiver members how they have felt supported by the Centre



Roberta Douglas

"Emotional support was just what I needed being a mamma bear with feelings of guilt and fear.

The Centre showed me there is hope and has helped me be strong again for our son Brandon. The GAP Fund has also assisted with the high costs of many trips to the city for medical appointments before and after two recent surgeries."



Alexandra Walker

"The GBCSC has been a wonderful help to my husband Stephen, and myself during this cancer journey so far. We travelled to London every Monday to Friday throughout the winter during some awful weather that added to our already stressful times. It was too far to drive every day.

The Centre has been incredible with the financial assistance for gas and accommodation. We are so very grateful for this."



Bruce Clayton

"The Centre has taught me I'm not alone in this journey of support for my loved one.

We all deal with our concerns differently. At the Caregivers Group, we share our caregiver experiences with each other and help give hope to one another. I leave my meetings feeling good and I am so thankful for my new friends who have given much comfort at my most difficult time of my life."

A MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April is a time of the year that we highlight the impacts of cancer in our lives and our communities during Cancer Awareness Month.

It is also a time of support for our organization and members. Thanks to the generosity of six donors, every contribution made to the GBCSC in April was matched up to \$40,000. The funds raised helps us expand programs, maintain welcoming spaces, and ensure that no one faces cancer alone.

Spring also marks the start of a busy and exciting season for our organization. We are looking

forward to gathering with our community at the Butter Tart Classic Pickleball Tournament and the Georgian Bay Cycle For Hope. These events are not only wonderful opportunities to connect, but they also play a vital role in sustaining member support.

The GBCSC is also celebrating its 15th year. We will be hosting an event to mark this important milestone on September 12th. Mark your calendars and celebrate with us!

Thank you for being part of this caring community. Together, we continue to make a difference.

Dylan Lalonde



Yoga for Breast Cancer Continued from Page 1

Another regular participant Sharon Zwicker is enthused about the new program being offered.

"I love this class. I always feel fantastic afterwards!"

Amanda is looking forward to building Yoga for Breast Cancer.

"I want us all to keep learning and growing together, so that we can discover ways to support ourselves both physically and emotionally every day."

JOANNE VANDERVEER

COMMUNITY:

Collingwood

MEMBER SINCE:

2025

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

What were your initial impressions of the GBCSC?

I am overwhelmed with the amazing programs offered through the Centre. The available programs, volunteers, and close proximity have allowed me to get very involved, both as a member and volunteer (I am a retired nurse, having volunteered in other local community agencies).

How has being a member supported you through the ups and downs of your cancer journey to date?

The availability five days a week of access to a 'home' and volunteers and staff has been invaluable to me... I know a friendly face is a five-minute walk from home!

What services or programs have made a difference to you?

Programs like crafts, the annual Cycle For Hope, on-site counselling, group support, Home for the Holidays craft fair, and more are so appreciated.

The staff ask for input on what other activities we may like to see offered. I've also really enjoyed Soup for the Soul (homemade lunches are delicious) and the educational piece of the Cancer Talks Speaker Series has been invaluable.

All programs and services are free to members. How important is free access to this support?

Having a cancer diagnosis is a lot to deal with... emotionally and in every other way. I feel so very grateful to be able to access all the therapeutic and social services provided through the centre with no incurred costs.

The GBCSC is all about providing support locally. What does it mean to you that it's local?

Having this cancer support centre in Collingwood is so amazing... close to the hospital and YMCA! As I said, I live so close. I also volunteer so can be present for many events as needed.

How has the GBCSC given you HOPE?

All I can say is that I feel community. It has grown in its first year with the staff/volunteers who help operate it daily. I have met so many amazing people through its development. It has enriched my life.

Anything else we haven't covered?

My husband is in LTC, having moved there shortly before my diagnosis in fall 2020.

As a caregiver, I am supported by everyone at the Centre as well. I feel joy, love, and caring all of the time.

Did You Know...

Over 2025, 1,500 individuals made a donation to the GBCSC totalling close to \$400,000. This includes donations made in support of our annual Georgian Bay Cycle For Hope.



RAYTHEON ELCAN LENDING HELPING HAND TO PROVIDE COMFORT TO MEMBERS

The GBCSC launched its Comfort Kit initiative a year ago. These kits provide helpful items to individuals often facing weeks and months of cancer treatments. The Kits were well-received and distributed widely to GBCSC members and others throughout the communities we serve. The initiative's success also posed a dilemma: how to replenish the supply of kits for another year. That's where a local community partner came in, Raytheon ELCAN.

ELCAN, with its facility in Midland, showed immediate interest in the Comfort Kits when the GBCSC reached out for support last summer. For some at ELCAN, it connected to their personal journeys.

"It was appealing to me because I received a comfort kit myself as a breast cancer survivor of 18 years, which consisted of items that were very much comforting and needed while I was receiving treatments," explains Pauline Laurin, Executive Assistant.

"There are several of our employees who have either been through some cancer or a family member has, so it only made sense that we get involved and support this well-needed cause."

ELCAN generously provided \$7,000 to the GBCSC to create additional Comfort Kits for the coming year, including some new items as well as a reprint of the popular Cancer Journal. They also provided the people power to assemble the kits. ELCAN's Employee Experience Team plans events and organizes volunteer opportunities for different events and initiatives.

"We share volunteer opportunities across the company when we need additional help," says Kristy Dalzell, Associate Director, Engineering. "We had 10 volunteers from across the company who volunteered their time to pack the items into the comfort kits. The volunteer list filled up in minutes... this cause resonates with so many of our employees."

This volunteer opportunity to put the kits together turned into a fun-filled task where employees had a chance to support a great cause and to interact with other employees beyond their regular working teams. They finished 75 Kits in 1 hour. Everyone realized the importance of getting them together, so that GBCSC could have the kits ready to distribute.

"Volunteering gives a human connection to making a meaningful difference in the community where we live and work," says Kristy. "Cancer touches so many in our community, family and employees, it's important to support the human side of treatment which GBCSC does through these Comfort Kits."



Georgian Bay
Cancer Support Centre

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