

SPRING 2024

How you're making a difference for New Zealanders facing cancer

Newscan

**Your
Generosity
In Action**

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United Against Cancer!

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**Cancer
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku
o Aotearoa

Welcome to the Spring Edition of Newscan 2024!

As spring arrives, and Daffodil Day comes round once again, I am reminded of the dedication and resilience that drive our efforts against cancer. This season, we highlight the positive impact of your support through stories of courage, hope and community. In this issue, you'll discover the success of Daffodil Day, dive into Keith and Jenni's experience at our Lodge, and follow Frith's journey with bowel cancer. You'll also meet Sudha, a staff member whose personal connection to our cause drives her passion, and learn

what inspired 9-year-old Serena to take a leap of faith—literally—by skydiving to raise funds for families facing cancer! Additionally, you'll find the latest updates on cancer research, including Anastasiia's groundbreaking endometrial cancer project featured on page 8. From the bottom of my heart thank you for your commitment to helping Kiwis facing cancer. I hope you can see just how much of an impact you are having as you read through the pages of this newsletter.



Helen Carter, Chief Executive

Ngā Mihi

Helen Carter
Chief Executive

What is waiting behind room 413?

In November 2023, Keith Dacomb was told the best course of action for his prostate cancer would be five intensive CyberKnife radiation sessions at a hospital far from home. This cutting-edge treatment was poised to be a game changer.

"It was completely uncharted terrifying territory as no-one we knew had received this type of treatment before. Amplified by the life-saving treatment being a 280km round trip from our home and three children."

"We were bracing ourselves for the early morning starts for us "country bumpkins". We were worried about the fatigued return trips and unknown side effects of the treatment with lack of dignity on the road."

The financial burden of travel was also weighing heavily on their minds.

To add to the stress affordable accommodation near the hospital was virtually impossible to find. A kind friend offered a room in their house, but it was still 40km away, and Keith was concerned about the difficult incontinence side effects of treatment.

Fortunately, just in time, a room became available at our free Cancer Society accommodation.

"The Lodge staff were amazing and a few weeks before the treatment start date, we were so relieved to hear that the door to room 413 would be open for us. It was a huge sense of relief."

In January, Keith and Jenni made their way to the Lodge for a two-week stay and discovered what awaited them behind the door to room 413.



Keith and Jenni Dacomb



"It was a haven with privacy to face this challenge with dignity. A comfortable bed provided a recharging sleep, there was an en-suite bathroom, and a calm and serene space to recoup for the next battle round against the dreaded cancer. Close friends were also able to visit, boosting spirits."

"The staff were respectful, caring and professional, answering any questions and treating us as if we were part of their families."

The communal space also became a safe haven for the couple. It offered a source of unexpected therapy, where Keith could openly discuss his treatment and experiences with other men in similar situations. Jenni, too, looked forward to seeing familiar faces whilst preparing meals.

We are so grateful that Keith and Jenni have chosen to share their story with us.

Every year we welcome thousands of guests to Cancer Society Lodges, our incredible free accommodation, which simply wouldn't be possible without your generous support. If you would like to support Kiwis like Keith and Jenni to stay at our free accommodation as they face cancer, please head to cancer.org.nz/donatenow.

Daffodil Day – Aotearoa United Against Cancer!

For 34 years, Daffodil Day has inspired Kiwis to come together in the fight against cancer, raising both awareness and crucial support for the Cancer Society's life-changing work. This year was truly remarkable, with schools, businesses, street collectors, and our dedicated staff all coming together to create an unforgettable day.

In celebration of Daffodil Day, check out these wonderful photos from the day.



A Year of Impact

Over the last year, your support has helped make so much possible!

16,025 bednights at the Cancer Society's Lions Lodge

11,525 contacts with a supportive care nurse offering advice, information, advocacy and support

113,950km travelled by volunteers transporting clients to cancer treatment and appointments

Cancer Society Support Invaluable on Frith's Bowel Cancer Journey

As 2022 drew to a close, book-lover Frith began experiencing some concerning symptoms. And when they worsened, she had no choice but to see a doctor. The result was shocking: Frith was severely anaemic, and further tests revealed the cause—she was diagnosed with bowel cancer that had metastasized to her liver.

"I think it took me 2 or 3 weeks to get my head around it, to tell people and to start to ripple out those circles of support."

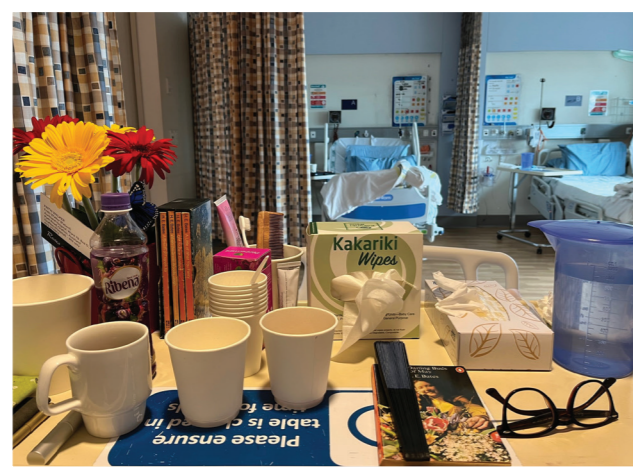
"I was telling people that I knew wouldn't break, and that I knew wouldn't break me when I told them."

Frith was swiftly swept onto the medical conveyor belt and began her first course of chemotherapy. She tried to keep life as normal as possible, continuing to work from home, but an emergency bowel rupture caused those plans to go out the window.

"In early February, I ended up in emergency surgery which was quite traumatic. I was off work for three months recovering - it's been a real rollercoaster ride."

Physically, life is really different, but I'm still me."

Despite the physical challenges of surgery and chemotherapy, Frith knew she needed more than just medical treatment to navigate this journey. That's when she turned to the Cancer Society for support, and found access to counselling and support services invaluable.



The view from Frith's hospital bed



Frith receiving treatment

"The Cancer Society is amazing, oh my gosh! The fact that this place exists and all the humans in it exist doing what they do is incredible."

I've had the great privilege of having them help me through the last months and man, the help is like way more than how you deal with chemotherapy."

"Having a non-family member to talk with has been crucial because I don't know how a parent can give advice to a kid without thinking please don't die. Honestly, it's just been gold to have Cancer Society with me on this journey."

Crucial services like access to free counselling, nursing, accommodation, and transport remove significant financial burdens from patients and their families, allowing them to focus on what really matters- their health, family and recovery journey. They ensure that every Kiwi, regardless of their financial situation, can access the care they need during one of the most challenging times in their lives.

"The fact that this free support is available to everyone, because cancer doesn't discriminate, is pretty amazing. What a gift!"

"People can receive nursing and counselling support or come and stay here at the Cancer Society lodges and easily access the hospital. For someone who maybe lives too far away - that's incredible."

Frith is still in the midst of her cancer journey, with more rounds of chemotherapy planned until the doctors are confident that the cancer in her liver has reduced and are able to operate. In the meantime, Frith is focused on getting through each day by cherishing the small, everyday joys that life brings.



Frith and her friends

"The little moments are an awesome thing that should be allowed to make you smile. It could be a daisy growing out of the footpath or a particularly fancy doughnut, or someone being kind to you unexpectedly."

All those moments of little joy add up to way more than maybe the big dream or goal you thought you wanted to achieve. So, I am focussed on honouring those moments and not waiting for life to happen tomorrow - because it's happening right now."

As Frith continues her journey, we are grateful to be able to provide ongoing support to her and thousands of other New Zealanders facing cancer. This vital support is only made possible by the generosity of caring Kiwis who are committed to making a difference. Frith wholeheartedly encourages anyone considering supporting the Cancer Society, whether that's through volunteering their time or making a donation, to get involved.

"It is undeniable that [people's donations] help, because you can't do this journey alone."

"Even though you may never meet the people you have helped, it's the fact that you've helped someone - you've helped a mum stay alive for her kids, or you've helped a brother stay for his sister..."

I can be living proof that the people who you see out there have got a smile on their face no matter what they're facing because they know the Cancer Society is here. Come on, you can't put a price on that!"

We are deeply grateful to every New Zealander who supports the important work of the Cancer Society.

Your generosity ensures that the Cancer Society can continue to be a place of healing and provide practical support for Kiwis facing the toughest fight of their lives. If you would like to make a donation today to help this crucial work continue, please head to cancer.org.nz/donatenow.

From Daughter to Advocate: Sudha's Story



Sudha Bhana is the wonderful Volunteering Manager at the Cancer Society, but her connection to the cause started long before her role here. In fact, it was supporting her father through a 'rollercoaster' ride with cancer that led her to her current position.



Sudha Bhana, Volunteer Manager

Sudha's father Amrat was diagnosed with leukaemia in 2013. There were limited options for treatment open to her father due to his age and other complexities, but he was able to go on a trial drug.

"That gave Dad another two years, but it was a rollercoaster... a whole lot of ups and downs adjusting to that treatment."

She said it was a struggle to watch him in pain, and she tried to hide her emotions much of the time to stay strong for him.

"My Dad had a tenacity to live. He'd never let anything become a barrier to just wanting to live life. I really admired that about him. He was always brave and so kind to everyone in the hospital. He had a real gratitude in him even though he was going through so much."

I was so grateful for that service because I was working and trying to juggle everything. Dad tried to drive as long as he could but in the end, he couldn't drive any longer and so that's when we had to have help. He would get dropped off by the Cancer Society volunteer drivers at his treatment and I would pick him up after work."

The Cancer Society's support over that period in 2015 had a lasting impact on Sudha and her family. Being able to now ensure others get that support when they need it is like a full circle moment.



Sudha holds a photo of her father Amrat



She recalls coming to the Cancer Society for an interview for her current job five years ago and being amazed by the breadth of support on offer.

"I remember sitting waiting for my interview and thinking 'Wow, I didn't know all of this amazing stuff existed'. I didn't know about the nursing, I didn't know how huge the whole fundraising effort behind Daffodil Day was. And now I get to be part of it - it's my great honour to support the volunteers because they supported my dad."

Sudha thinks of her dad often in her daily work as she talks to volunteers about the purpose that connects them, but she particularly remembers him on Daffodil Day.

"I do a prayer every morning for Dad and on Daffodil Day I'll be like 'this one's for you'."

1 in 3 Kiwis will be diagnosed with cancer. To help the 1 in 3 access crucial support services, please make a donation at www.cancer.org.nz/donatenow

Serena's Sky-High Tribute: A 9-Year-Old's Jump 4 Cancer!



Serena Vinola Takerei-Havili

Jump 4 Cancer is an epic fundraising event that challenges participants to leap—literally—by skydiving to raise funds for cancer support and research. The exhilarating initiative offers a thrill-seeking experience for those brave enough to participate and plays a crucial role in supporting the Cancer Society's mission to improve the lives of those affected by cancer.

For 9-year-old Serena Vinola Takerei-Havili, this adventure has special significance.

Serena's mother, who initially introduced the idea, recalls how Serena had always dreamed of skydiving. When the opportunity arose to participate in Jump 4 Cancer, an event aimed at raising funds for cancer support, Serena jumped at the chance.

"I sat with Serena and explained what the Cancer Society was doing and how I have had family members who have suffered from cancer. She said she would love to try to raise funds to help the families who are going through the things our family went through."

Serena is dedicating her jump to her great-grandmother, known as Nanny Chick, who battled cancer. Although Serena never got to meet her, she feels her presence through her family's stories.

"I never got to meet her; my little sister is named after her."

Determined to raise money for the cause, Serena was taken aback by the amount of love and support she received.

"Seeing how many people donated—people I don't even know, but who know my mum and grandparents—was incredibly powerful."

Her mother adds, *"Serena was nervous about raising the funds, but she went above and beyond. She took on extra chores to contribute, and the support from friends and family was overwhelming."*

Her sky-high mission is more than just a jump; it's a symbol of hope and a reminder of the positive impact one person can make. Through her efforts, Serena is supporting a crucial cause and honouring the memory of her late family members.

"I think the Cancer Society does an amazing job in helping those who suffer from the disease."
- Serena.



Serena and her mum Tina

That Post Jump Feeling!

Check out these shots of some brave supporters who jumped for cancer!



Andrew Bayly MP in left and centre



Karan Patel

Anastasiia's Incredible Research on Endometrial Cancer!

Anastasiia is a Research Fellow at the Cancer Society Research Centre. Originally from Ukraine, Anastasiia came to New Zealand eight years ago to pursue her PhD. Last year she was awarded a post-doctoral fellowship from the Cancer Society and started her own project dedicated to endometrial cancer.

"It's the most common gynaecological cancer in the world. But the current problem with endometrial cancer is that the available current tests for diagnosis and treatment are invasive. That's why less and less women decide to go and be diagnosed, and then decline the treatment.

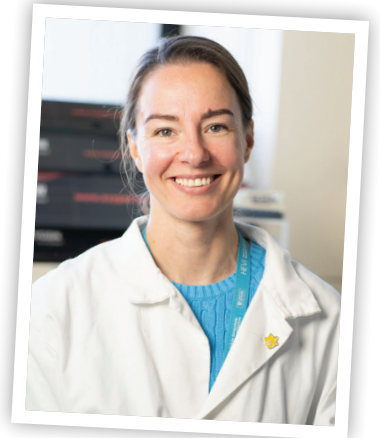
With my research, we are trying to solve these problems and offer affordable and minimally invasive tests to get patients diagnosed early."

The project is currently in its second microbial study phase, and if all goes well, the tests will be clinically trialled by 2025!

"We are aiming to find biomarkers for early detection of endometrial cancer and are exploring two different avenues. First, we are looking at the signals that are sent directly from the tumours and can be detected in a blood sample. By examining specific proteins in the patients' blood, we aim to determine not only whether the person has cancer but also what type of cancer it is.

The second approach will examine whether a certain bacteria in the uterus could indicate the presence of endometrial cancer.

Thus, with two different approaches we are trying to design clinical tests that are easy to administer, minimally invasive, and better accepted by our patients to detect endometrial cancer early."



Research Fellow Anastasiia



Anastasiia hard at work in the Cancer Society Research Centre

Researchers like Anastasiia couldn't do any of this without your support.

"I'm focusing on cancer research because cancer remains one of the leading causes of death worldwide. And each year millions of lives are being affected by this.

For someone considering a donation to Cancer Society,

I would say that by donating you become part of the solution. Your donation directly funds the research the research that can change the current cancer statistics for the better."

Watch Anastasiia share more about her research here: www.cancer.org.nz/researchers

Thank you so much for your incredible support! We couldn't do it without you.

Waikato/Bay of Plenty Cancer Society

For any queries regarding fundraising or donations please contact our friendly team.

☎ 0800 123 230 ✉ donations@cancer.org.nz

www.cancer.org.nz

