

Living Well

Autumn 2025 Newsletter



The power of connection

You help families find support throughout their cancer journey

It was following her mother's diagnosis with late-stage ovarian cancer in 2017 that Julia first became connected to The Ottawa Cancer Foundation.

"It was a social worker at The Ottawa Hospital who first told me about it," she remembers. "And I called right away." As a palliative caregiver in her twenties, Julia leaned on The Ottawa Cancer Foundation for mental health support – particularly when it came to navigating end-of-life care and bereavement.

"There are young people who are experiencing the challenges of these caregiving roles," Julia says. "You can really help them, and caregivers of all ages, by supporting the Foundation."

After accessing caregiver supports at the Community Cancer Hub, Julia unexpectedly found herself in the role of client again after receiving her own cancer diagnosis. "Finding out I had cancer was scary," she remembers. "It was this unknown

desert. I thought, how am I going to handle that? How is my family going to handle that?"

Now, Julia accesses help from the Cancer System Navigation program as well as participating in support groups at the Community Cancer Hub. "It's helped me a lot personally," she says. "You really benefit from talking to others who get it, in a safe space."

When asked about the importance of The Ottawa Cancer Foundation in our community, Julia is quick to speak to the necessity of supporting the whole family during a cancer journey.

"There's a ripple effect," the 36-year-old mother of one explains. She points to the many logistical considerations implicating the family unit: who takes time off work, who is caring for kids, the tremendous financial strain, and more. The emotional toll of watching a loved one navigate cancer adds another layer of complexity.

"Donors who contribute to The Ottawa Cancer Foundation help support clients and their families to keep a sense of normalcy in the day-to-day," Julia shares gratefully.

DEAR CANCER,



**YOU TRIED TO ISOLATE ME
BUT I FOUND AN ARMY STANDING BESIDE ME**

She's found the support she and her family need at the Community Cancer Hub. "Support is a critical piece to anyone's treatment journey. Support is what allows you to get through the hard days. It allows you to rejoice on the positive days."

You ensure people like Julia can connect with peer support and other critical programming.

Visit ottawacancer.ca/our-services/social-peer-support to learn more about our peer and social support offerings.



The Ottawa Cancer

Foundation was there, and they are a constant. That's really important."

~ Julia, Grateful Client



Games, giggles, and good company

You help people navigating cancer feel less alone



From our Kitchen to Yours

Apple Cinnamon Overnight Oats

These simple overnight oats will not only keep your tummy smiling afterwards but they will also save you time in the morning!

Ingredients

- ½ cup rolled oats
- ½ cup applesauce
- ½ cup milk
- 1 tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tbsp natural peanut butter
- 1 apple, chopped

Directions

1. The night before, mix all ingredients together, other than the chopped apple, in a glass jar until combined.
2. Seal jar and store in refrigerator overnight.
3. The next morning, enjoy your oats topped with chopped apple and drizzled peanut butter or any topping of choice!

Anna Brown knows firsthand just how valuable the support offered by The Ottawa Cancer Foundation can be. During her own journey with breast cancer, she was referred by The Ottawa Hospital to the Community Cancer Hub.

"I've benefited from so many of the different programs here," Anna shares. "From cancer system navigation to nutrition support, everyone has been really great." She makes a point to attend as many of the exercise classes as she can, and also enjoys art and music programming.

When she completed her cancer treatment, Anna wanted to find a way to give back in thanks for the support she received through the Community Cancer Hub. Along with her husband of 21 years, Don, she decided to start a weekly games night called Game On.

"I wanted to give people a space where they could just have fun for a couple of hours," Anna explains. Every Wednesday night, a group gathers at the Community Cancer Hub to play games ranging from Scattergories to Uno. The group particularly enjoys playing Crush, a dice game.

Anna is grateful to have the space to bring people impacted by cancer together. "It's not clinical here — it's a house, it's homey. It's a really nice environment. The staff members make time for you and chat. It's great."

The friendships built through Game On have blossomed beyond the doors of the Community Cancer Hub. Participants often go out for coffee together after playing games, and Anna and Don have even travelled to a music festival with friends made through the program.



Anna & Don Brown, Clients and Founders of Game On

"These are lasting connections," Anna says. "It's really important to get together with others who have had similar experiences and talk openly." The group's track record speaks for itself: games night has now been successfully running since 2014.

Your generosity helps people break through the isolation that often comes with navigating cancer. Thank you for supporting vital social programs!



A recipe for community

You're bringing people together for food and friendship

Laughter and mouth-watering aromas fill the halls of the Community Cancer Hub every week during Simmer and Social.

"It's an informal space for people to stop by, connect, and share a warm meal together," explains Anika Boulanger, Manager of the Community Cancer Hub Program. Each Wednesday, a team of volunteers prepares a meal tailored to the nutritional needs of people with cancer – typically both vegan and gluten-free. Recent offerings have included cranberry and pear salad, Thai red curry, and minestrone soup.

Demand for Simmer and Social has become so high that a second evening session was added.

The program has also expanded to include Sip and Social, a relaxed Saturday morning gathering featuring light refreshments along with coffee or tea. Some weeks are

specifically geared towards young adults aged 18 to 49, while others are open to anyone over the age of 18.

These cornerstone social programs are often a gateway for clients to explore other services at the Community Cancer Hub. Both Simmer and Social and Sip and Social are scheduled to overlap with other programs running at the Hub. "Clients are very grateful for that because sometimes getting out of the house is hard" says Anika. "Being able to do more than one thing after making that effort is really helpful."

Each week's meal opens with participants being invited to share the highlight of their week. For many, Simmer and Social is that highlight.

"You can see the transformation with clients,"

Anika reflects. "They might enter feeling more isolated, appearing reserved or quiet, but after a few times attending you'll see them building meaningful friendships. People will meet up outside of the Hub or even drive each other to appointments."

The community offered by Simmer and Social as well as Sip and Social is vital to combatting the loneliness many people with cancer feel. "It's so important for those who are facing isolation, who may not have a support network at home that understands what they're going through," says Anika. "As soon as they walk through the doors, we've got people saying they feel right at home."

Thank you for giving people a sense of belonging amidst the challenges of cancer.

To view upcoming Simmer and Social and Sip and Social events, please visit:

ottawacancer.ca/calendar



I wish donors had a window

into these moments, to see firsthand the joy they help bring to life."

~ Anika Boulanger,

Manager, Community Cancer Hub Program



The Ottawa
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Peer support for prostate cancer



The Ottawa
Cancer Foundation

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You give community groups the space to foster connection

One in eight men will experience prostate cancer in their lifetime, with over 700 new cases last year in Ottawa alone. As people navigate their diagnosis and treatment, Prostate Cancer Support Ottawa (PCSO) endeavours to provide much-needed peer support and education.

“Men are often conditioned to soldier through alone,” reflects PCSO Chair Al Carl. “What we provide is the ability to talk to other people who have gone through prostate cancer – the treatment, the side effects, all of it. We’ve lived it.”

PCSO meets on the third Thursday of each month at The Ottawa Cancer Foundation’s Community Cancer Hub.

Meetings are offered in hybrid format, allowing people to log in from home or attend in person.

Terry Day is the Peer Support Lead for PCSO, matching new group members with volunteers who share similar experiences. “When you walk out of the hospital for the first time, you’re in a daze,” he explains. “The effect I see time and time again when I’m talking to people is relief – you can see it in their faces. It’s the sense that I don’t have to do this alone, there’s people out here who have done this before, I can hear their stories and get rid of a whole lot of internal anxiety.”

It’s thanks to you that we can open the doors for community groups like Prostate Cancer Support Ottawa.

“We’re appreciative of the partnership The Ottawa Cancer Foundation offers us,” says Al. “The meeting facilities at the Community Cancer Hub have made a huge difference for our group.”



**Al Carl, PCSO Chair &
Terry Day, PCSO Peer Support Lead**



The Community Cancer Hub was lit up in blue for Prostate Cancer Awareness month.

AURORA BALL
CELEBRATING MILESTONES

Presented By

NOV
22



5:30
PM

The Westin Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Drive



The Ottawa
Cancer Foundation

Light up the night with The Ottawa Cancer Foundation, as we celebrate 30 glowing years of community and care.

Join us at The Westin Ottawa for an unforgettable evening featuring a live performance by **The Strumbellas**, the inspiring **Aurora Impact Awards**, and the always powerful **Fund-a-Need Auction** with **Layne the Auctionista**.

Purchase tickets now

It will be an evening filled with *meaning, music, and moments that matter*, all in *support of vital local cancer care*.

