

Lindsay pharmacist concerned for staff amid COVID-19 pandemic

Catherine Whitnall

“It’s going to be a marathon, not a sprint.”

Cathy Puffer is no stranger to doing what it takes to ensure a positive outcome.

A pharmacist for more than 30 years and owner of RemedysRX in Lindsay, Puffer is also a cancer survivor who is determined to also ‘beat’ whatever COVID-19 throws at her.

“This is one hundred times more impactful than anything else we’ve experienced,” said Puffer who had opened the doors to her Kent Street business the same year H1N1 hit. “With SARS and H1N1 we all went about our daily lives. I was the only pharmacy doing compounding at the time, so I was very busy, but we kept going because, just like now, we were there for our patients.”

It’s an ongoing testament to why Puffer became a pharmacist in the first place.

Puffer’s career actually began in high school working part-time for pharmacist Cece Sylvestre. Watching him interact with his elderly clients, Puffer knew she too wanted to be the type of pharmacist that does more than put pills in a bottle.

Right now, that also includes keeping them safe.

To mitigate risk, Puffer is adhering to such measures as social distancing - only one customer at a time is allowed in the store - ongoing sanitizing and rigorous cleaning.

She has also expanded her delivery service - trips are now double - at no charge.

“I want people to stay home. . . This is all very scary,” said Puffer. “With the confirmation of community transfer, it’s important that people listen and do what is being asked of them. You may have no symptoms but can still spread the virus.”

Puffer understands the importance of keeping the economy going but says for small businesses like hers, it’s a “fine line” between doing what’s necessary to survive and doing what’s best.

“I worry about those who have to work closely together, like nurses, grocery store clerks and construction workers,” said Puffer. “I can’t imagine doing this for months, but we may have to.”

That very fact, and the death of a local man to COVID-19 on March 22, is beginning to weigh on Puffer.

“I haven’t been sleeping well,” she said, explaining her thoughts are occupied by balancing keeping her staff safe and healthy and making sure her customers’ needs are being met. “I lay awake wondering how do I do both? How long can I keep this

up? What is this doing to my staff?”

Puffer notes patients appreciate that she and her staff continue to serve “the front lines” and have been “very sensible and understanding.”

And, on the positive side, parking downtown has never been better.”