



MILESTONE MOVE: Acton's Heather Morris-Stokes (left) made her milestone 50th blood donation, with the help of phlebotomist Debbie Seymour, at last Thursday's Canadian Blood Services clinic at the Acton Legion. Acton's Valarie Slater made her first blood donation, beginning what she said will be a life-long tradition. — Frances Niblock photos

Research helps outsmart cancer

Research is leading the fight against cancer and the dollars donated this month in the annual campaign for funds – will pay for research to change the course of the disease and how it is treated, and to support cancer patients.

During April, The New Tanner will share the stories of Acton cancer survivors.

When Kimm Fletcher's husband was 19 years old, his father died of a brain tumour within six months of diagnosis. This was very traumatic for him. Imagine the trepidation and fear this must have triggered Scott when his young wife, Kimm was diagnosed with a brain tumour at 37 years old. He quickly relived his father's illness. Their plans for a long life of raising their children, Marty three and Keidon six were shaken. Last January 24 marked a day they would like to erase from their calendar. When scans confirmed the tumour, Kim was in surgery by February 9 at the Trillium Hospital

in Mississauga. Six weeks of radiation followed at the Odette Cancer Centre at Sunnybrook Hospital.

Life changed suddenly for the whole family. It was important to sell their home in Acton and move to Milton where they could be closer to family. With the children being so young, it was difficult to explain and adapt to the behaviour changes. This active soccer coach, playful and energetic mom now was feeling the side affects of surgery and treatment. It was hard to help them understand. But counselling at Well-spring helped to cope and she soon made deals not to sweat the small stuff.

What started out as a usual Sunday going to church, playing soccer turned into a headache. It soon manifested to a serious migraine, and within an hour of lying down to rest, she began feeling electric shocks throughout her left side. She thought she was having a stroke. She was taken to emerge and soon became suspicious of the seriousness when after scans she was admitted to a private room and everyone treated her nicely.

Kimm worked for Siemens, which is a medical solutions company that made all CT, MRI and big scan machines. Her career made her familiar with how and why things are done. That was frightening. She saw how huge the tumour was when she looked at the screen. Her parents and sister lived in Montreal. She was grateful for Scott's family, her brother, family and friends being close by to help and

for Scott to get her through the darkest days. He was always there for her. She tries to keep busy when she has the dark thoughts. Kimm lights up any room with her electric spirit. A year later, and she is making each moment count. She is back at the gym and hoping to coach soccer again this spring.

In appreciation for the support that CASHh has given her, Kimm finds it important to give back. It is imperative to instill appreciation and values to her children, Marty and Keidon. They knew Mommy couldn't drive, and CASHh helped her get to treatments. They cheerfully request donations to CASHh instead of receiving birthday gifts.

This has brought in hundreds of dollars to help others. Of course Dad sets the example through his love of race car driving and having sponsors give to CASHh. This past Christmas, Kimm and Scott took

the little ones to see Santa. Kim noticed that Keidon had a handful of change to give to Santa. He was quickly reprimanded that it was not right to bribe Santa for what he wanted. (I sensed that Mom was reminiscing her younger years of mischief.) But Keidon guardedly told Mom and Dad that he was giving this money to Santa for the poor people. Now how touching is that?

Kimm is optimist but it is important to be realistic. She is preparing memory boxes for the children. She has written her "bucket list" and has moved forward to accomplish what is important to her. She always wanted to audition for a musical and has recently been accepted for the spring show for the Globe Theatre. The call-back was not as significant as was the importance of clearing that from her bucket list. When singing for us we were confident that her beautiful voice

qualified. She recognizes the need to not waste time and do what needs to be done. At first, Scott was uncomfortable in her passion to have a bucket list but has accepted her need to do what she needs to do. Her audition got her the part and we look forward to cheering her on when she performs this spring.

Kimm is thankful for Scott always being there for her, especially his kindness and patience during the darkest days. Her Catholic faith has kept her strong throughout this ordeal. Her priest gifted her with a saint Pergrine (Patron Saint of Cancer victims) medallion and has since passed it on to her best friends' Dad battling pancreatic cancer.

We enjoy Kimm's visit so much. Her laughter is intense as is her stories. When this feisty red head leaves the office the room seems much smaller. We are all fighting this with you Kimm. All the best.

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