

# Cancer fight a team effort for local woman's friends, family

As part of cancer month Cancer Assistance Services-Halton Hills executive director Sheila Smith has written the following story about her friend, Kimm Fletcher, who has used CASHh's services.

When Kimm Fletcher's husband Scott was 19 years old, his father died of a brain tumour within six months of diagnosis.

Imagine the trepidation and fear Scott experienced when his young wife was diagnosed with a brain tumour at 37. He quickly relived his father's illness and their plans for a long life of raising their children, Marty, 3, and Keidon, 6, were shaken.

January 24, 2010 marked a day they would like to erase from their calendar. When scans confirmed the tumour, Kimm was in surgery February 9 at the Trillium Hospital in Mississauga. Six weeks of radiation followed at the Odette Cancer Centre at Sunnybrook Hospital.

In the short time I have known Kimm, I have learned that she is the type of person that if she can't make it through one door she will try another and if that doesn't work she will make her own door.

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. Kimm, an active soccer coach, playful and energetic mom now was feeling the side

effects of surgery and treatment. It was hard to help her children understand what was happening, but counselling at Wellspring helped them to cope and she soon made deals not to sweat the small stuff.

It was a usual Sunday for Kimm—going to church, then playing soccer—but when she returned home she came down with 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 the hospital's emergency department and became suspicious of the seriousness when, after scans, she was admitted to a private room.

Kimm worked for Siemens, a medical solutions company that makes CT, MRI and other medical 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.

With her parents and sister living 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.

A year later 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 Cancer Assistance Services-Halton Hills CASHh has given her, Kimm finds it important to give back.

It is imperative for her to instill appreciation and values to Marty and Keidon. They knew their mom 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, Scott 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. Kimm 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. But Keidon guardedly told his parents that he was giving this money to Santa for the poor people. Now how touching is that?

Kimm was looking forward to returning to work, however, her short-term memory problems deemed her permanently disabled. She misses working as her co-workers considered her the advocate for any issues they wanted discussed at meetings.

She would speak up fearlessly.

Kimm is an optimist but realizes 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 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.

She 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 she has since passed it on to her best friend's father who is battling pancreatic cancer.

We enjoy Kimm's visit so much. Her laughter is as intense as her stories. When this feisty redhead leaves the office the room seems much smaller.

We are all fighting this with you Kimm. All the best.



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