

Cancer Can Be Beaten

Every three seconds, cancer picks a fight with another Canadian.

That sobering statistic is thankfully buffered by another that shows for the first time, more people diagnosed with cancer are living, not dying. And they aren't doing it alone, but with the

help of family and friends and with programs and services offered locally by the Acton Branch of the Canadian Cancer Society and by Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills (CASHh).

During Cancer Month, The New Tanner invites readers to take hope in the

stories of survivors – Acton residents who have fought and won their battles with cancer.

They will share their stories in coming weeks – proving that Cancer Can Be Beaten. This week, Shirley Dyc talks about her tenacious fight with cancer.

A survivor's story

Acton's Shirley Dyc sounded surprised even as she said that fighting breast cancer is "perfectly doable." "Its not anything to be so scared of anymore – I guess that's easy for me to say because it (treatment) is finished for me, but even treatment wasn't near as bad as I thought it was going to be," Dyc said on Monday, recounting her successful battle with breast cancer.

With dense breast tissue, Dyc, 55, knew she had a higher risk factor for breast cancer, she had regular mammograms beginning in her 40s, and also did regular self-examinations. She said her diagnosis was "right out of the blue" and a shock to her system. "If it wasn't for my mammogram, I never in a million years would have found the lump because it was so far back," Dyc said of that August 2010 test that found a mass.

Dyc survived two surgeries, four rounds of chemotherapy and 25 days of radiation over five weeks, and remembers questioning doctors when they reduced the chemo to

four sessions from six because of heart-related issues with the drugs. "The doctor said he didn't want to cure me of breast cancer only to have me end up with a heart problem. I didn't even know if he was telling me good news or bad news," Dyc said.

She said that she felt more secure in her treatment when she told the doctors to "just please do whatever you have to do to get me through this." Dyc currently has a yearly mammogram

and is on a hormone-blocker for five years. "I think one of the luckiest things that I had done was to not go on hormone replacement therapy because the doctors said if I had, the cancer would have grown in leaps and bounds and I would have had a worse battle."

Dyc said one "scary" aspect of having breast cancer was that she never had any pain or was able to feel any lump, yet the cancer was there." She credits early detection and advances in



Shirley Dyc



ETERNAL HOPE: Holding Daffodil pins – the Canadian Cancer Society's symbol of hope – local officials helped kick-off the annual Acton cancer campaign for funds recently at Knox Presbyterian Church. On hand were, from left: Wellington Unit manager Lorraine Skarratt, campaign manager Amy Banks, Councillor Clark Somerville, Mayor Rick Bonnette and Councillor Mike O'Leary. – Frances Niblock photo

treatment – made available through donations to the Canadian Cancer Society – for her good outcome.

Dyc said she never asked "why me?" but decided that her first 54 years were healthy and she would face the cancer square on. She said the worst part of having cancer was a burn from

radiation, and the best part was finding out that she had a "lot more family, friends and church friends for support."

Post-treatment, Dyc said she did a lot of research and made some lifestyle changes, including no longer eating red meat, and buying hor-

mone-free chicken. Asked if she has any advice for people with a new diagnosis, Dyc said, "It is probably not as terrifying as you think it is going to be – it's a not as frightening as it used to be, and it is possible to get through it and get back to your normal life."

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