

Walkathon on Saturday to help local woman pay for cancer drug

By **CHRIS CLAY**
Metroland Media Group

Ballinafad resident Nancy DaCosta is facing one of the cruelest choices one could possibly imagine.

Empty your bank accounts to pay for a drug that's helping you feel better but is not covered by the Ontario government or do nothing and succumb to the cancer that's ravaging your body.

Last year, DaCosta was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. She's been receiving the drug Avastin and had her fourth treatment recently. DaCosta says the drug makes her feel better by reducing the frequency and severity of the debilitating headaches she's experiencing.

However, each treatment costs about \$4,200 and DaCosta receives them every two weeks.

"It will come to the point, financially, where we will have to step back and make a decision (on whether we can afford to continue)," said DaCosta, 54. "But, the Avastin



JOE AND NANCY DACOSTA

has definitely made me feel better. I was having some intense, migraine-like headaches, but since I started Avastin, I haven't been getting them (as bad)."

DaCosta said she and husband Joe are currently dipping into the family savings to cover the costs. However, friends and family are rallying to her rescue. They've already raised more than \$35,000 to help pay for the medicine and they're not done yet.

Heather Byce, who was neighbours with DaCosta for two decades in Mississauga and remains her best friend, has helped organize the Walk

With Me charity event happening Feb. 22 at the South Common Centre. The walkathon, which runs from 8-9 a.m., hopes to raise another \$35,000 to cover the costs of DaCosta's drug treatments.

With about 50 walkers already registered, they're currently looking for more people wishing to take part and donations are always welcome.

Byce said Avastin is funded in other provinces including British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. In Ontario, the drug is covered for patients with colon cancer but not for other types of cancer.

"You just wonder how someone who's so good can be sentenced to something so awful," said Byce.

DaCosta will have another MRI next month to provide an update on her health and the effectiveness of the treatments. Byce said, after DaCosta started receiving the treatments, her tumour shrunk and the inflammation around her brain was reduced.

DaCosta understands Avastin might not cure the cancer

(she said it's too soon in the product's life to know if the drug has that ability) but is willing to try it. She's philosophical. Even if it extends her life by a few years, it's something she wants to explore.

DaCosta, who moved to Ballinafad about two years ago, lived in Mississauga for decades.

Walkers and pledges are needed for the walk-a-thon.

To register, or for more information, visit www.facebook.com/nancyavastinfund. Those interested in making a donation can visit their Go Fund Me site (www.gofundme.com/Nancys-Avastin-Fund).

Those looking for more information can also email heather@nancysavastinfund.org or call 1-855-561-4287.

"At this point, every little bit helps," said Byce.

Artcast to cast Jeffrey Baldwin statue for charity fundraiser

Jeffrey Baldwin was a five-year-old Toronto boy who on November 30, 2002, died of pneumonia, septic shock and starvation—a result of child neglect. When he died just two months before he was to turn six, he was a mere 21 pounds—one pound less than he weighed on his first birthday.

An Ottawa man, Todd Boyce, has begun a mission to raise \$25,000 in order to erect a life-size bronze memorial statue in the image of Jeffrey wearing his Superman costume.

Artcast of Georgetown will cast the statue.

This memorial will become a centrepiece tribute within Greenwood Park, Toronto. It will be a symbol to everyone about how important it is to be diligent about reporting suspected instances of child abuse to prevent another needless death such as Jeffrey's.

For information please visit <https://www.youcarving.com/memorial-fundraiser/jeffrey-baldwin-memorial/126592>



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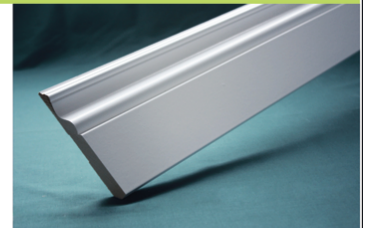
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