

# Cancer patient uses crowdfunding to raise funds for lifetime trip to Africa

By **Nelia Raposo**  
Special to The IFP

Cancer patient Amy Aubin-McDougall is hoping people in Halton Hills will help fund a month-long volunteer trip to Togo Africa that she is taking with her husband John and 8-year-old daughter Avery this November.

The Georgetown family needs to raise \$15,000 to make this dream come true.

"This is a very big challenge. We need to raise at least 75 per cent of the funds by September," Aubin-McDougall, 33, says. "We just keep telling ourselves that we will be going to Africa."

So far, they've raised less than \$2,500 using a crowdfunding website.

Visiting Africa is one of many goals on the "ultimate list" that the family compiled after realizing their new normal is living life to the fullest between the young mom's radiation and chemotherapy sessions for stage four ovarian cancer.

She was first diagnosed with stage two ovarian cancer a decade ago, at age 23, when studying law at York University.

Since then, she has endured various treatments and a full hysterectomy. She gets CT scans every three months. Currently, doctors say there is no evidence of disease but Aubin-McDougall clarifies, "I still have cancer in my body. It is just at an undetectable level which is why I get scanned so often. I get bloodwork done ev-

ery two weeks."

Originally, she applied and was accepted to volunteer in South Africa, through a foundation called Fresh Chapter that helps cancer survivors rediscover themselves. But going without her husband and child didn't feel right. So, she declined the offer and began looking at ways her family could make the journey together.

"I did a lot of research. I really have my heart in farming. I

can and Canadian.

"Through Projects Abroad, volunteers have their pick of projects in an outdoor setting in more than a dozen destinations and can pursue whatever piques their interest," says Christian Clark, a deputy director at Projects Abroad.

To encourage people to support them, the family is offering incentives such as hand-written postcards from Togo for \$25 donations to an Avery Surprise— to be revealed later— for \$150.

"This experience will change all of our lives. It has the possibility to impact other peoples' lives. This farming project is about sustainable farming and about feeding the community over a long period of time," she says.

She chose Togo because of its relative safety, political stability and French is spoken there. The trip will allow Avery, who is a Grade 3 French immersion student, to practise her language skills.

Until her autumn trip to Africa, Aubin-McDougall continues to volunteer close to home. She has been putting in 60-hour weeks as a National Olympic Committee Assistant with the Pan Am Games in Toronto, helping eight athletes from Saint Lucia feel at home. She will also be helping at the Para Pan Am Games beginning Aug. 7.

To help support the Amy Aubin-McDougall family visit <http://www.gofundme.com/aubinsin-africa>.

For more information about Projects Abroad visit [www.projects-abroad.org](http://www.projects-abroad.org).

'This experience will change all of our lives

— Amy Aubin-McDougall —



volunteer at Whole Circle Farms and I just fell in love with it. It just makes me so happy. I can't go there enough. I just love it," Aubin-McDougall says. "To volunteer, and farm, and do it with my family: I might never want to come home— except for the health care. I don't think Togo is known for its healthcare."

Projects Abroad is the organization that the Aubin-McDougalls are travelling with for this adventure.

Headquartered in the United Kingdom, Projects Abroad volunteers are mostly European, Amer-



Georgetown resident Amy Aubin-McDougall volunteered at the Pan Am Games helping Team Saint Lucia athletes feel at home in Toronto. Posing with Aubin-McDougall (far left) are Beth Lygoe (the sailing coach), Jeanelle Scheper (high jump athlete), and Stephanie Lovell (sailor) with husband John and daughter Avery in front.

Submitted photo

## Realtor to trek to Machu Picchu in support of abused women, children

On August 16, local Royal LePage Royal LePage Meadowtowne Sales Representative Jill Johnson will be departing with a group of 60 colleagues to trek to the lost city of Machu Picchu, Peru in support of the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation.

This group of enthusiastic trekkers will trek eight days at high altitude, foregoing running water, electricity and cell service to raise funds for local women's shelters and long-term solutions to end family violence.

Johnson has set a goal to raise \$7,000, which will be donated to in Halton Women's Place in Milton.

"If you're like me, you know someone who has been affected by violence or abuse, either in their adulthood or as a child. Sixty-seven per cent of Canadians say they personally know a woman who has experienced abuse and one in three teenagers have reported dating violence.



JILL JOHNSON

Thankfully, the Royal LePage Shelter Foundation is helping to put an end to violence and abuse," she said.

"Each dollar we raise and every step we take will make it easier for women and children to walk safely away from violence," said Johnson.

Visit her online fundraising page <https://royallepage.myetap.org/fundraiser/machupicchu/individual.do?participationRef=1185.0.211663207> or visit [www.jilljohnson.ca](http://www.jilljohnson.ca) and click on her "Machu Picchu Fundraising Page".

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