

# Cancer survivor discusses her triumphs - *Cancer can be beaten*

By Frances Niblock

"Cancer can be beaten" is not just a smart marketing slogan; it is reality for many, thanks to research into life saving treatments.

During April's Cancer Month several local cancer survivors will share their stories in a public celebration of life. This week, Ann Adema shares her triumph over breast cancer.

Q: How and when did your battle with cancer begin?

A: "In July of 2002, I found a breast lump. We were doing some deep breathing that day - it was a shock. It didn't hurt, but it didn't feel right. I was kind of lucky because I work at the doctors' office, so I saw a surgeon the next week and he did a biopsy and told me it was cancer."

Q: Being in the medical profession, was that comforting or was it scarier because you knew more than most people?

A: "I think it made it faster to get surgery, but that was it. I think I was

numb and the surgery was so fast - you sort of don't understand it until down the road, until your brain gets up. You're kind of going through it. I didn't feel bad about it. I didn't like losing a breast, but I didn't need it anymore."

Q: How did you cope?

A: "What I thought was good about it - it wasn't an organ. Losing my hair was worse than losing my breast. That's what I didn't like - I thought that I looked ill. I knew I had to take time off and I thought that I'd read and watch TV, but I couldn't concentrate and I think that was from the chemo. But then we got a puppy and I wasn't bored any more because the dog had to go for walks."

A: Many say that the chemotherapy is worse than the cancer. How was it for you?

A: "I had to have four sessions. For the first one, I was like 'bring it on' but then it was 'oh no' and then the last one I didn't want to have because I found the fatigue was cumulative, but then at least it was done."

Q: What kind of follow up did you need?

A: (Sheepish and hestitant.) "I'm supposed to get checked every year, but again, because I work at the doctors, if I had a concern I would just ask somebody. So I wasn't very compliant as being a cancer patient. Isn't that awful?"

Q: Have you been able to put cancer behind you?

A: "I don't worry about it and the best part of it, of my experience, was the support from the community, family and friends I learned what is important. Like a breast is not and relationships are."

Q: Where did you get your support? I understand that you are part of a local breast cancer group.

A: "I did have a little issue. I wanted to talk to someone and when on-line all I could find was a B.C. support group. I did call a girl that had had breast cancer, so she came over that's how our little group started. We would go out to dinner once a month and we wouldn't talk about cancer so much,

but talked about Acton and solved all the problems."

Q: Are there any lingering issues following your successful treatment?

A: "The fatigue is an issue. It seems like a waste of health care money if it's still a long-term result from the chemo. No one says that memory and fatigue is going to be long-term issues. We laugh about the memory thing - there is something called chemo brain or chemo fog. Everybody has it - sometimes you can't find the right word or be mid-sentence and stop and wonder what you're talking about."

Q: Looking back, did you play an active role in deciding your treatment options?

A: "I don't remember. As a layperson, how do you make an educated decision about whether to have chemo or whether to have radiation? You can't. I find that the people who do the best are the people who do what their doctor tells them (to do.) The bottom line is you have to trust the doctor and they're not perfect?"

Q: Was that lack of control hard to deal with?

A: "I wanted to go off one drug and what she (the



Ann Adema

doctor) did by allowing me to go off that stuff was give me control. I didn't have that at the beginning. The way I can describe it is that all of a sudden someone plucks you out of your life and there's nothing familiar and you have no control."

Q: What changes did cancer bring to your life?

A: "I don't dwell on it. I appreciate the life les-

sons learned from it. Now, I have this thing that it's more fun to plant a garden than to go to work. I enjoy nature more and I have my faith life too and that's a comfort. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Q: Do you have any advice for someone with a new diagnosis or in treatment?

A: "Stuff isn't important. Seek out support - they can call me and I'll put them in touch with the rest of us who have survived. It makes a big difference if you can talk to someone who has been through it and is walking, talking and working."

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK APRIL 18 - 24, 2010



**VOLUNTEERS**  
FROM COMPASSION TO ACTION



In a time when everyone is being asked to do more with less, Town of Halton Hills, its Council and staff would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the volunteers in our community who continue to give of their time and of themselves. Volunteers bring a multitude of skills, experience, knowledge and compassion to so many individuals and organizations in our town. National Volunteer Week is a time for all of us to pause and celebrate the energy and commitment of volunteers.

I am very proud of our community's caring, cooperative spirit. Much of what our Town has accomplished is the result of the contributions of our local community volunteers. In order to express our thanks and gratitude to our volunteers, the Town will be hosting a Volunteer Appreciation Celebration themed '**Celebrating Our Everyday Heroes**'. The event will be held at the Gellert Community Centre the evening of **Tuesday, June 8th, 2010**. All volunteers in Halton Hills will be extended an invitation later this month. For more information or to register for the event, "Everyday Heroes" are encouraged to visit [www.dontneedacape.com](http://www.dontneedacape.com).

Let's celebrate our local volunteers for helping to make our community stronger. This National Volunteer Week, be sure to say thank you to a volunteer!

Sincerely,

Mayor Rick Bonnette

Town of  
Halton Hills  
Thanks You!



*"In Memory of Louise"*

*Help find the cure*

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