

# New support group helping residents with cancer

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Correspondent

While the detection and treatment of cancer has improved immensely in recent years, the vital role of emotional support is all too often overlooked.

That was something Sally Gyton and Merna Lummiss found out when they were diagnosed with breast cancer. Although the two women had known each other for a number of years, it was in facing up to

their illness together that they became close friends. "I heard Sally had (cancer) and I'd been diagnosed with it," explained Merna, who lives in Goodwood.

"I bumped into her at Toronto

Bayview (Regional Cancer Centre) and we started talking about the things that had happened to both of us."

### Support

At the time of the diagnosis, she said, "we didn't know where

to turn for help and we both felt we needed a support group in the area."

The two women attended a ten week seminar on coping strategies at Scarborough Centenary, which both found very helpful, "but we knew it was coming to an end," observed Sally.

"We had gotten so much out of that group and the contact with other patients that we started our own group last October, with three of us and Merna's mother," Sally said. Scarborough resident Betty Kapur, who has Hodgkin's disease, was the other founding member.

### Isolation

The group members agree that one of the hardest things to cope with after the initial diagnosis is the terrible sense of isolation. "You get the feeling that you're totally alone until you find other people in the same condition," Sally said.

The terror and fear of the unknown can be overwhelming, she added. "All you hear is the word cancer," concurred Merna. In a support group, "you realize there is life after this."

Family members are welcome to join the group because "the family has to learn how to cope too," stressed Sally.

Although the group has no affiliation with the Canadian Cancer Society, most doctors they spoke to were supportive, she said.

"They have just released information in the U.S. that (breast cancer patients) will live up to ten years longer if they belong to a support group. They now feel that stress affects the immune system, which is an inhibitor of cancer cells."

### Stress management

As a result, the group is hoping to incorporate stress management into their meetings. However, just talking about the fears and problems they face has given them an enormous sense of release.

"You need the support from someone else who's in the same position you're in," said Sally.

"There are many fears you wouldn't want to discuss with your family. We can be ourselves, say what we want to say and listen to each other."

Merna echoed her sentiments.

"I don't know what I would have done without these girls sometimes."

Although they are considering a more structured approach for their meetings, "we've had so much to talk about we've had no time for anything else," said Betty.

### Worked wonders

And talking out their fears and concerns seems to have worked wonders in this group, whose sense of camaraderie is abundantly obvious.

With humor, compassion and friendship, these six women have given each other a new lease on life.

Anyone who is interested in joining them or who would like to learn more, should call Sally at 642-2329 or Merna at 640-2306.

April is cancer month, so and the local volunteers are asking residents to please give generously when a Cancer Society canvasser comes to your door.

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ANY MEMBER WISHING TO SUBMIT CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION MUST DO SO IN WRITING AND BE IN THE HANDS OF THE EXECUTIVE 5 DAYS PRIOR TO THE ANNUAL MEETING. W.S.M.H.A. BOX 976 STOUFFVILLE, ONT., L4A 8A1

## BALLANTRAE TENNIS CLUB

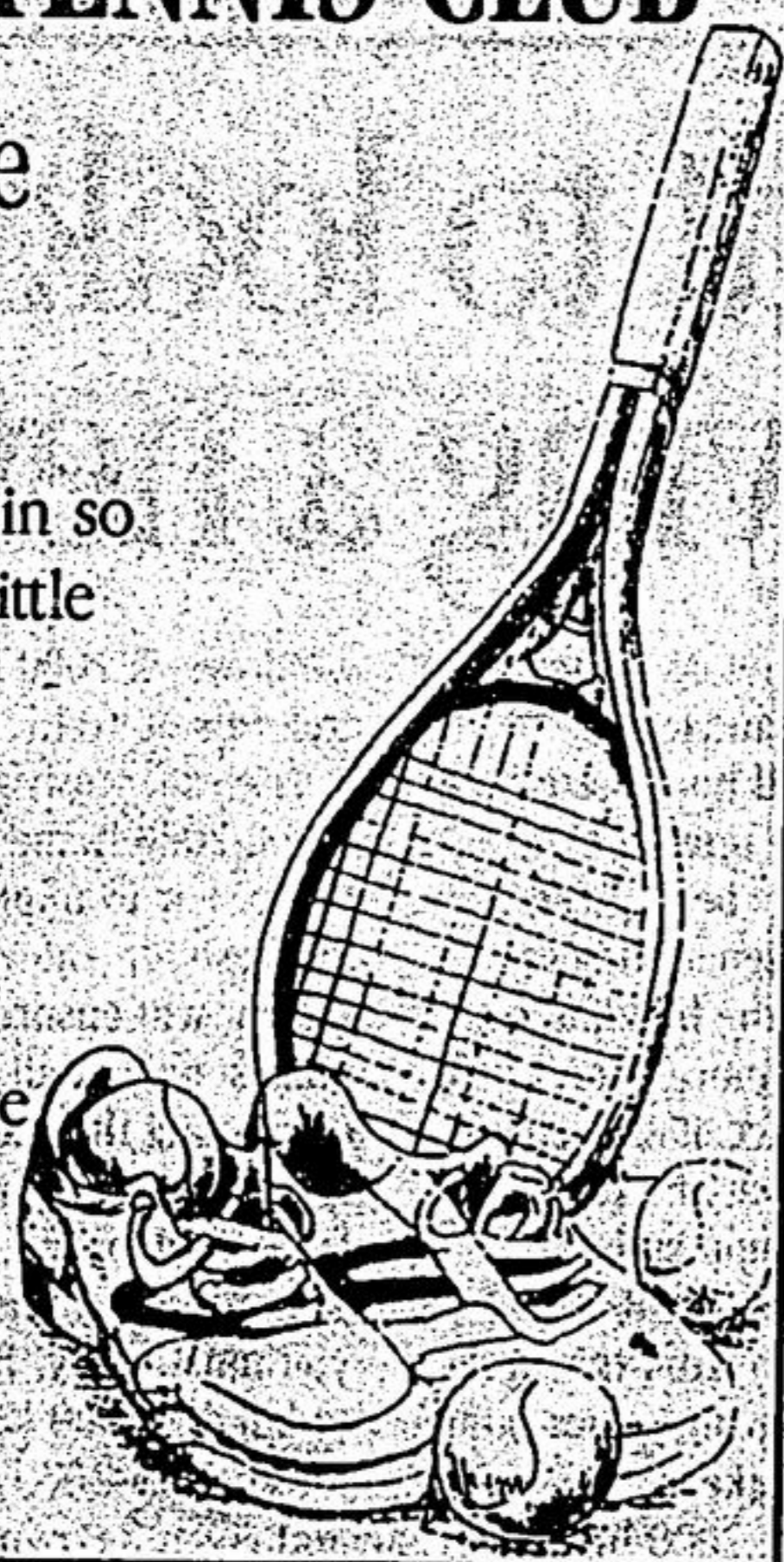
Pull 'em out of the closet!

It's that time of the year again so sign up and bring spring a little bit closer.

Registration date - April 25  
10-1

Ballantrae Community Centre

New Pro - Junior, Beginner  
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## Notice to the residents of Whitchurch/Stouffville Easter Holiday

Garbage and Recycling Blue Boxes normally picked up Friday, April 17th will be picked up Thursday, April 16th. Easter Monday - regular collections resume

**HAPPY EASTER**

## INCOME TAX RETURNS

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