

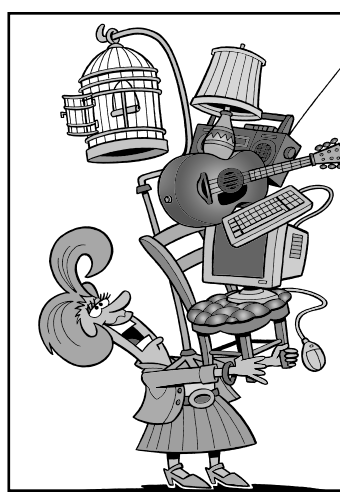
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Kate Coen helps people battle cancer

BY CHRIS SIMON
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Kate Coen was a cancer warrior.

The Newmarket woman founded KC's Cancer Cushion Fund in an effort to help other people battling the disease pay for treatment or living expenses.

While Kate succumbed to cancer in June 2008, her legacy thrives and the fund has raised almost \$500,000. To this date, the fund is largely run by her family and friends.

Coen was a stay-at-home mother of three, who experienced first-hand the financial hardships brought on by cancer.

Her husband took a good amount of time off work while she was sick, to take her for treatment.

"We all tried to pitch in, but we all had jobs too; most of the time, it was left up to (him) to take her and it was really hard on them, financially," KC's vice president and Kate's niece, Jen Haines-Brett said.

"But when she started to meet people she was going through chemotherapy with, she'd hear how horrible it was for them. She met a woman who was a hairdresser and a single mother. She used to take the bus or subway for chemotherapy and would go to work right after. "Time she should have spent

with her son was spent at work trying to pay bills. That was sickening to my aunt."

Haines-Brett says Coen's death still stings. She kept many of Coen's emails and goes through them every once in awhile. Coen referred to Haines-Brett as her 'little sis', 'friend' and 'daughter'.

'Time she should have spent with her son was spent at work trying to pay bills. That was sickening to my aunt.'

"She was a very special person," Haines-Brett said. "She was kind of my hero. She was only 12 years older than me and she lived with my parents for quite some time. She was more like a sister and became my best friend. She talked to everyone; whether you wanted to or not, you made a friend by the time you left. She would try to make a party out of everything. Nothing really sums her up."

Kelly Pickard-Leftery, a long-time friend and current president of the fund, also taught Coen's oldest child at school.

"The people she really connected with were these other women, like herself, who were going through chemo," she said. "She was someone who didn't leave it



Kate Coen (right), and her niece, Jen Haines-Brett enjoy a holiday hug.

to someone else to step in. She was very action oriented. She tried to take a very difficult experience and create some meaning out of it."

Coen was also quite positive, even as her health declined.

"She firmly found her faith later in life," Haines-Brett said.

"I could never understand how she could be so positive about her prognosis. It made me sick. She

wanted to help every person she could. Se was a people person and involved in everyone's life."

The fund will host its 10th annual pub night May 14 at Newmarket Community Centre and Lions Hall, at 200 Doug Duncan Dr. Pogo Rodeo, featuring Barenaked Ladies drummer Tyler Stewart and Newmarket High School graduates Tom Gibson and Derek and Dun-

can Swain, will perform.

Several sponsorship opportunities are available and organizers hope to raise \$50,000.

Admission is \$30 per person and tickets can be purchased at cushionfund.com.

For more information, visit the cushion fund website or Facebook page or follow the organization's Twitter handle, @cushionfund.