

A spotlight on cancer programs

By Laura MacInnis
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SUSSEX — After losing her husband to cancer last year following years of illness, a local mother and businesswoman is now working to ensure that other families struggling with cancer are aware of the financial and emotional support available through the Canadian Cancer Society.

"There is a lot of emphasis on cancer research but I would like to see more of a spotlight put on the personal services that the Cancer Society provides to people and families that are struggling with the illness in the Sussex area," said Laura Araneda.

From covering fuel costs getting to radiation appointments to online forums for people to share their experiences with fellow patients, the community-based charitable organization has more programs than people may realize.

As president of Progressive Diamond Drilling, Araneda is calling on her company to get on board this year to help inform Sussex families about the support that is out there for them.

Her husband, Cesar, passed away in April 2012. The two met in 1994 in Regina. The Chilean immigrant was working in the hotel industry at the time and the two fell in love and moved back to her hometown in Kings County where they had four children.

Before the devastating loss, for four years their family life was turned upside down by illness, trips to the hospital in Saint John and the emotional toll of knowing he may not be around.

Araneda said not only is there the burden of lost income and extra personal care but the medical and travel expenses associated with cancer treatment is a financial nightmare to many families.

To offset the cost of travel expenses for cancer treatment, patients can apply for the organization's Travel Assistance Program.

Anyone needing financial help for transportation or other costs can contact practical support services for



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Laura Araneda and Gerald Pearson of Progressive Diamond Drilling in Sussex, will be spending the next year educating the public in Kings County on the support programs offered to cancer patients through the Canadian Cancer Society in hopes that more people will take advantage of what is offered once they know what is available to them.

the region, at 1-800-455-9090, or they can inquire with the staff in oncology who will refer them to a social worker in the hospital who is aware of the programs available and get help filling out forms.

"We look at each application quite separately," explained Rosemary Boyle, spokesperson for the Canadian Cancer Society. "We look at the individual needs. Everyone has exceptional circumstances."

She said they always consider funding on a case by case basis.

"When you have to go for radiation treatment 25 days in a row, who is going to drive them there?," said Araneda. "It affects all your family members. In my position I was able to

arrange my schedule to make things work but not everyone is in the same boat.

"What would most people have to do? Would they have to stop working themselves or call on other people to do things for them? A lot of people don't have that kind of support system."

If a person becomes ill, for confidentiality rules, the Canadian Cancer Society cannot contact the family. The family must contact the society in order to access services. At such a difficult and stressful time in a family's life researching available programs is no easy task and Araneda said she wants to ensure Sussex families who are experiencing the

same financial and emotional chaos her family did can find the information they need at their fingertips.

Gerald Pearson, Progressive Diamond Drilling's project manager, does a lot of volunteer MC work at local benefits. "We've talked about what we can do as a company and how we can look at getting the information out there. He's going to spread the word at these events."

Boyle said educating people about their offerings can be a challenge.

"Every organization has a problem with promoting their programs and services but we do have a wide base of volunteers. We ensure those volunteers are well equipped with the knowledge of our services," Boyle said.

The Exceptional Assistance Program is in place to help cancer patients with expenses they are incurring due to their cancer diagnosis, but that aren't already covered under another program.

And the society can look at helping with a portion of the cost of home care.

Practical support programs help alleviate some of the everyday concerns, such as supplying patients with a breast prosthesis. A wig and turban bank is available and equipment requests can be made through Easter Seals New Brunswick.

In addition, information services and emotional support are provided through the society.

CancerConnection, for instance, is a one-to-one telephone peer support program for people living with cancer that matches those diagnosed with cancer or their caregivers with trained volunteers with similar experiences. Patients can call for free at 1-888-939-3333 to get connected to someone who can help.

Similarly patients and family members can connect with those who have shared experiences in an online forum at cancerconnection.ca.

For youth, the Canadian Cancer Society offers New Brunswick Masons Camp Goodtime and the Junior Leadership Program for children and teens with cancer or a history of cancer between the ages of seven and 16.