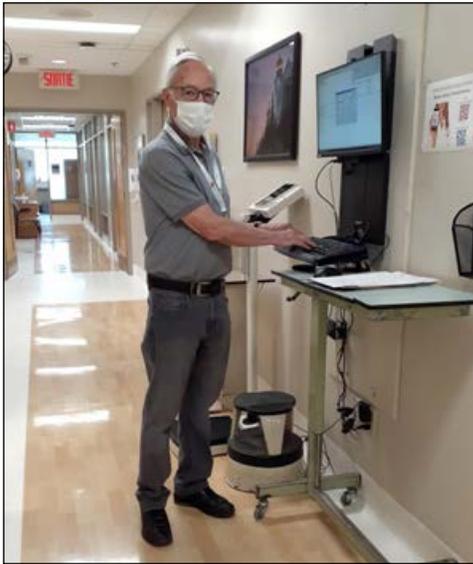


HOPE & COPE

The Power of Community *Impact Report 2021*



September 17, 2021 was the first day back after 18 months for Ernie Zelniker, volunteer in the Hematology/Oncology Clinic.

Coming home

Exuberant – that’s what Lynda Lubin felt when she stepped into the Jewish General Hospital’s Oncology Clinic after an 18-month absence. “I missed everything about volunteering in person, especially the face-to-face interaction with the patients,” she notes. Patients were thrilled to see volunteers in action once again, and Lynda was elated by the red-carpet welcome from hospital staff. “One of the doctors asked me, ‘Are you a mirage?’”

Kim Gartshore, Nurse Manager in Oncology, is equally delighted with

the return of Hope & Cope volunteers. As she explains, from ensuring patient comfort to meal distribution to helping with administrative or clerical duties, volunteers are an integral part of the functioning of the clinic. “Their return is a sign of hope. It means some of our staff will have a bit of breathing room, and that the patient experience will be that much more pleasant.” Vanessa Lewis, Assistant Head Nurse in the Hematology/Oncology Unit on Pavilion K, agrees. “The time and presence of Hope & Cope volunteers is something special – being able to have someone take the

Coming home

(continued)

time to listen to patients' concerns and fears relieves a burden from their shoulders."

As noted by volunteer Lucy Di Cesar, the presence of volunteers on the Palliative Care Unit adds an essential dimension to care. "We provide quality interaction that the patients really need but the staff don't have the time for, such as bringing them a glass of water, chatting with them and massaging their hands and feet. That human touch is so important," she explains. Volunteers also comfort and support family members, who often want to talk about the emotional toll they are experiencing as they accompany their loved ones through the end stages of life.

While concerns about COVID weighed heavily on the minds of some of our volunteers, most were reassured by the stringent safety measures and protocols they are required to follow. These include sending proof of double vaccination and familiarizing themselves with safety measures and procedures prior to their arrival. Before each and every shift, they must complete a self-assessment screening questionnaire related to COVID symptoms. "The protocols are really common sense items - frequent washing of hands, masking and maintenance of social distancing being the most obvious," observes Ernie Zelniker, a volunteer in the Hematology/Oncology Clinic. "My experience at the clinic is one that I look forward to at all times and I am grateful for the opportunity to be of service," he adds.

Clearly, for many of our volunteers, the benefits of in-person volunteering outweigh the risks.

"I get so much more than what I put out. The patients make you feel like you're worth a million bucks."

— Lucy Di Cesar

Training materials updated to reflect latest research on virtual support

As difficult as the pandemic has been for cancer patients, it also has had an emotional impact on our volunteers, who derive meaning and satisfaction from their association with Hope & Cope. "For volunteers, there is therapeutic value in sharing their experiences with cancer patients. It's very empowering," explains Wellness Centre Program Manager Carly Berlin.

Not surprisingly, many volunteers who missed patient contact eagerly transitioned to phone outreach and/or to online activities such as workshops, wellness classes and support groups. "It was a steep learning curve, but they quickly mastered the technology," notes Carly.

Under Carly's supervision, a master's student revamped our volunteer training materials with a focus on virtual support. Topics include how to read body language on screen, how to recognize distress over the phone or online, and how to create and respect boundaries in a virtual setting. "Research shows that after about 45 minutes on videoconferencing platforms like Zoom, people tune out," says Carly. Since the technology can be hard on the eyes and the body, volunteers encourage group participants to take breaks, stand up and stretch, and even turn off their cameras for a while if need be.

Clearly, a great deal of research and thought went into updating Hope & Cope's volunteer training. "We didn't just recreate what we do in person. I'm proud of our volunteers - they are versatile, adaptable and willing to support our patients any way they can," concludes Carly.





Report of the Executive Director

Eric Amar, CGA, CPA

For 40 years, Hope & Cope has helped people cope with cancer. While our ability to continue delivering this vital mission has been sorely tested these past 18 months, our staff and volunteers constantly upped their game, finding creative ways to respond to difficult challenges.

During the first early months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we transferred a majority of our peer support and wellness programs to an online format, and helped volunteers adapt to new ways of doing things by updating our volunteer training materials.

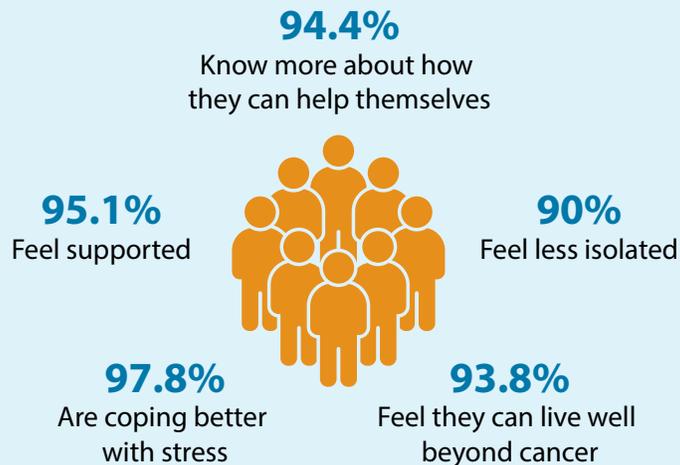
Our attendance statistics clearly show that patients who knew about us have relied on us more than ever, particularly for peer support and information (webinars). In the summer of 2021, to measure program attendance, service preferences, and most crucially, the impact of Hope & Cope both before and during the pandemic, we sent a detailed survey to just under 800 of our participants. We were heartened to learn that those who used our programs and services reported a very high level of satisfaction.

Unfortunately, our prolonged absence from the hospital’s cancer clinics and inpatient units complicated our efforts to reach out to new patients. We are addressing this challenge by investing more resources in digital communications – revamping our website and broadening our reach through social media.

It is also clear that telemedicine is here to stay, and that this reality will have an impact on the roles of our volunteers. We remain committed to supporting volunteers through this transition, by helping those who wish to remain with us upgrade their skills, and by recruiting new volunteers to fill emerging needs.

As our staff and volunteers gradually begin returning to in-person services during what is now the fourth wave of the pandemic, we are excited by the prospect of offering cancer patients and their families the best of both worlds – robust on-line programming that allows those who live far away or who are feeling ill to remain connected and supported by Hope & Cope, and in-person services for those who crave the intimacy and immediacy of face-to-face interactions.

Impact of Hope & Cope according to our users



Report of the Chair

Suzanne O'Brien

Sustaining a legacy of hope



It has been 40 years since the day Hope & Cope opened its doors at the Jewish General Hospital, breaking the shame, stigma and isolation surrounding cancer and introducing the concept of well trained, cancer experienced volunteers as an indispensable ally in oncology care. Since that day in 1981, we have provided practical resources and psychosocial support to thousands of patients and their families at every stage of cancer.

While the five-year survival rate for all cancers combined has increased dramatically, aggressive treatments often leave patients with physical and emotional scars as well as long-term, debilitating side effects that can substantially reduce their quality of life. That's why Hope & Cope's patient-centered, volunteer-based and professionally managed programs are as essential today as they were 40 years ago. And it's why, in 2019, we launched our Legacy Campaign. Designed to shore up our endowment, the goal of this campaign is to provide Hope & Cope with a stable source of funding for the next 40 years...and beyond.

Despite a pandemic that has upended our lives in so many ways, once again, our donors have come through for us. We are deeply grateful to each and every one of them for their unwavering support of this critical campaign. We look forward to celebrating our collective success at our Butterfly Soirée in August 2022, when we also will have the pleasure of honouring our inspirational Founder, Sheila Kussner, who will be retiring after four decades of exceptional service to Hope & Cope.

As we put the finishing touches on a series of fun, whimsical, nostalgic, informative and thought-provoking events planned for our 40th anniversary year, we invite you to join us in celebrating our past and committing to a vibrant future for Hope & Cope.

At the forefront of cutting edge research

Along with her team in the Loiséle Lab, Dr. Carmen Loiséle conducts cutting edge research that contributes new knowledge to the field of psychosocial oncology. Dr. Loiséle is Scientific Director at Hope & Cope and holder of the Christine & Herschel Victor – Hope & Cope Chair in Psychosocial Oncology at McGill University.



Hope & Cope volunteers played a key role in a unique pilot study published by Dr. Carmen Loiséle and her team in the most recent issue of the *Journal of Psychosocial Oncology Research & Practice* (*Enhancing access to sustainable cancer supportive modalities: the roles of interactive health communication and trained volunteers on lww.com*). This study examined patients' support needs and preferences according to their distress levels on a series of 25 cancer-related issues such as fatigue, pain, nausea, anxiety, and how cancer may be affecting their family and friends. They found that participants who relied on a combination of support (e.g., a call from a trained Hope & Cope volunteer and an e-handout on specific topics) reported significantly less distress afterwards when compared to those who did not make any request.

Celebration fund supports unique virtual reality project

The innovative part of the study is that it relied on a sustainable source of support – our volunteers – who also helped recruit participants and delivered the intervention. Ultimately, these kinds of studies will provide the necessary evidence to implement more accessible forms of support for patients and family members who are affected by cancer.

Research highlights - 2020-2021

- **12 scientific publications with 4 more submitted for review**
- **6 national and international presentations**
- **6 peer-reviewed grants with 6 more requested**
- **Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation award: \$25,000 to fund graduate students**
- **2020 Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology (CANO) Award for Best Publication: Nurse Pivots and Patient Experiences of Cancer Care**
- **Dr. Loiselle elected Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Nursing**

Even in the most difficult moments, Marilyn Tietolman Fichman believed that where there is life, there is hope. As both a volunteer with Hope & Cope and a cancer patient, she understood the power of the mind-body connection and derived many benefits from complementary therapies such as massage and meditation. “Being part of Hope & Cope and giving back was so important to my mother,” recalls her daughter, Natalie Stern. On Marilyn’s 70th birthday – her last birthday, as it turned out – she created a Hope & Cope Celebration Fund to help ease the journey of patients, especially during treatment.



Hope & Cope introduced the Virtual Reality immersive experience to the Palliative Care Unit in 2018.

to its therapeutic value. “As patients become immersed in virtual reality, the tension leaves their faces and they become more relaxed. It’s an experience that improves their quality of life,” she explains.

Marilyn’s daughters Ina Fichman, Natalie Stern and Laura Beraznik and their families look forward to this project’s implementation in Oncology within the next few months. “Our mom loved travel and exploring new worlds. Virtual reality is the ideal combination of relaxation and escape. It will bring positivity to patients, which is exactly what she wanted to achieve with this fund.”

This special fund will support the expansion of virtual reality (VR) to patients undergoing chemotherapy at the Jewish General Hospital. VR technology is an immersive experience that transports patients to a favourite vacation spot, the land of their birth, a safari, an underwater adventure and so much more. As part of the Hope & Cope team that introduced this innovative technology to the Jewish General Hospital’s Palliative Care Unit a few years ago, Rifka Hanfling can attest

To donate to the Marilyn Tietolman Fichman Celebration Fund, please call the JGH Foundation at 514 340-8251.

Walking together in spirit

Hosted and organized by the Group Dorval, Sources and Saint-Henri, the annual Walk-a-thon in support of Hope & Cope's Cancer Exercise and Rehabilitation Program is a 14-year tradition so strong that not even a global pandemic could break it.

"The needs are great – perhaps even greater because of the isolation and disruptions caused by the pandemic," said Alex Trichas. Along with his cousins and business partners Nick, Chris and Andre Dimopoulos, and in consultation with Hope & Cope staff, Alex came up with a plan for a virtual walk that kept the spirit of this event alive while respecting public health safety measures.

On the morning of September 13, 2020 and again on September 12, 2021, all across the Island of Montreal, participants walked with their bubble of family and friends along their chosen routes, proudly raising funds for a cause so important to the hundreds of cancer patients who benefit from Hope & Cope's exercise program.

Walking in memory of their mother and grandmother, Rosa Maria Cisneros, the Calderon family made their way to Parc



Alex Trichas, Andre, Chris and Nick Dimopoulos check out the equipment in the Wellness Centre gym.

St. Maxime in Chomedey, Laval, the traditional site of the Walk-a-thon. As her daughter Teresa explained, *"Hope & Cope meant so much to our mother. She trained for the walk in the Wellness Centre gym and made us promise to keep walking every year as a family. COVID-19 was not going to stop us."*

The 2020 edition of the Walk-a-thon raised just under \$70,000, bringing the grand total at that point to close to \$800,000. Donations to the 2021 edition are still being accepted and can be made online: <https://my.crowdfunder.co/5orvzu>

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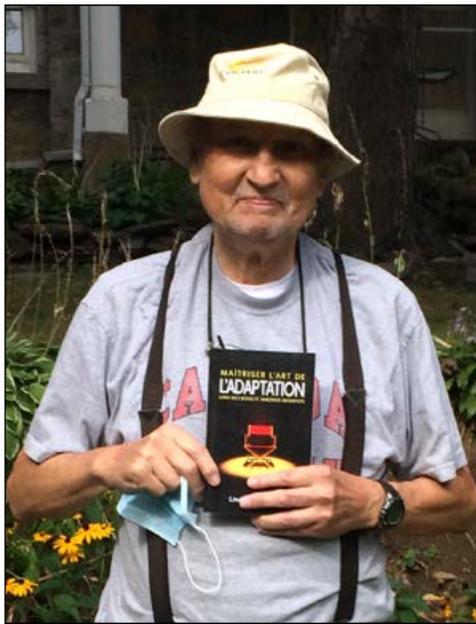
Editor:

Hena Kon

André's story: finding everything he needs

André Ladouceur remembers the exact moment he was diagnosed with stage 4 metastatic prostate cancer. "My world came crashing down on me," he says ruefully. The shocking news came mere weeks after he had been laid off from his job. Looking for support during what he knew would be an arduous journey, André immediately felt at home when he walked into Hope & Cope's Wellness Centre for the first time. "Even though the Centre was closed to the public on Fridays, the manager, Marcelle Kecman, invited me inside for a brief tour, gave me a copy of the calendar of activities and signed me up for the Men's Club, a support group for men with all types of cancer. I felt very welcomed."

That welcome continued as the 63 year-old met with our Exercise Coordinator, Anouline Sintharaphone, who evaluated his condition and prepared a personalized exercise program that included tai chi classes in our yoga studio and exercise in our fully equipped gym. He attended The



Art of Coping workshop where he learned valuable strategies for self-care. He became a regular participant in the Men's Club's monthly meetings over bagels and coffee at the Wellness Centre and made friends with his fellow cancer survivors. "We understand each other," he explains, adding, "I've met so many good people here. The volunteers are out of this world."

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, André panicked. He was quickly reassured, however, as Hope & Cope's staff and volunteers reached out to him by phone to check up on him and to inform him that many of his favourite programs and activities were available online through Zoom. While André readily admits that he misses the camaraderie of the in-person connections at the Wellness Centre, he is grateful for the online programming that has kept him connected to this supportive community. When he feels down or something bothers him, he knows that his Hope & Cope family is there for him.

"I came here with nothing and now I have everything I need."

André is equally grateful to the donors who continue to support Hope & Cope. "If I could speak to them personally, I would tell them that the value of this institution is priceless. In a situation that would otherwise be all doom and gloom, your donations breathe life and hope."

"Cancer in the time of COVID means we have never physically met, yet we share very personal stories on how we are coping. Some weeks are good, some weeks difficult, but each time we get together, we learn from, support and gain strength from each other."

— Laura Corcoran

Medical students receive valuable education at Hope & Cope

As a resident in Internal Medicine, Dr. Luca Melnychuk often sees patients at their worst – when they are acutely ill, their disease has progressed or they need to be hospitalized. It’s in those moments that he draws upon his experience at Hope & Cope, where he devoted 21 hours of community service as a second year medical student in



Dr. Luca Melnychuk

McGill’s Community Health Alliance Project (CHAP). “I met many patients who did really well after treatment. Knowing that good things can and do happen helps me see the larger picture. And where appropriate, I refer patients to Hope & Cope and other support resources.”

Wellness Centre Manager Marcelle Kecman, who has supervised 175 CHAP students since the program began eight years ago, proudly notes that Hope & Cope is a number one choice. She meets each and every student before they start, reviewing their CVs to see if they have particular interests or hobbies that can be aligned with our programs and services. For example, in December 2020, three students

in the combined M.D-Ph.D. program gave a timely and informative webinar on clinical trials.

“These are the doctors of tomorrow,” Marcelle says, underscoring the importance of our partnership with McGill University. In fact, Marcelle represents Hope & Cope on the McGill sub-committee that shapes the CHAP program. Four times per year, she is

invited to McGill to speak about Hope & Cope and answer questions from the students. As well, Hope & Cope was chosen to play an active role in a similar program for nursing students in their graduating year, launched this fall at McGill.

Marcelle advises the students to listen to patients and caregivers and to view our volunteers as important members of the team. “I tell them that no one plans for cancer in their lives but when it happens, it’s so important to find support.” She is continually amazed by the students’ eagerness to explore the psychosocial impact of cancer as they perform various tasks, from making follow-up phone calls and wellness checks to helping with the organization and set-up of workshops and special events.

Dr. Melnychuk fondly remembers his participation in one of our post-treatment workshops, where, in addition to speaking with patients one-on-one, he cooked up a pot of pasta for lunch.

“CHAP allowed me to see another side to patient care that we are not exposed to as physicians. Seeing cancer patients supporting each other and living well, and learning more about resources like Hope & Cope was a really valuable experience.”

To view our calendar of wellness activities, visit :

www.hopeandcope.ca/events-activities

or

call 514 340-3616



for more information about joining the Wellness Centre.