L'ESPOIR C'EST LA VIE
HOPE & COPE

IMPACT REPORT 24-25







The Path of Resilience



Board Chair Message

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my privilege to share with you Hope & Cope's Annual Impact Report. This document reflects not only the dedication of our staff and volunteers, but also the trust and generosity of our community.

This year marks my first mandate as Chair of the Board. Although new to this role, I have been a long-time supporter of Hope & Cope, a past participant in its services, and a dear friend of Sheila Kussner. This perspective has given me a deep appreciation for the extraordinary care and compassion that defines this organization.

As a Board, our foremost responsibility is to ensure that Hope & Cope remains strong, resilient, and true to its mission. We take this stewardship role seriously—overseeing strategy, resources, and accountability—so that every gift entrusted to us translates into meaningful impact for people with cancer and families.

This year has also been a time of renewal for our Board. We have welcomed new members whose skills and commitment strengthen healthy governance, ensure the sustainability of the organization, and keep us deeply connected to the roots of our community. Their guidance will be essential as we navigate the exciting transition toward becoming a fully autonomous charitable organization.

Hope & Cope's strength has always been its deep roots in the community. Our partnerships with the Jewish General Hospital, the Foundation, and countless community organizations—together with the unwavering support of our donors—enable us to carry forward Sheila Kussner's extraordinary vision. Together, we make certain that people with cancer and their loved ones have the support they need to face challenges with courage and resilience.

Looking ahead, the Board is committed to guiding Hope & Cope's growth and sustainability. By championing innovation, fostering collaboration, and ensuring sound governance, we will help secure a future in which Hope & Cope continues to be a vital and trusted resource for all who turn to us.

We are grateful for your partnership in this mission. Your generosity makes everything you read in this report possible.

With appreciation,

BARRY PASCAL

Executive Director's Message



Dear Supporters,

As I reflect on my first half year as Executive Director, I am humbled by the profound impact the Hope & Cope community makes every single day. Behind every number in this report are patients and families whose lives have been changed because of your generosity, your trust, and your belief in our mission.

This year's report follows the Path of Resilience. You will see it reflected in the points of impact where our volunteers and staff accompany individuals along the cancer journey.

Just as people affected by cancer follow their own path, Hope & Cope is also undergoing its own transformation. The Path of Resilience embodies the support we provide as well our evolution as an organization.

For decades, Hope & Cope was proudly affiliated with the Jewish General Hospital. Today, we are progressing toward full autonomy as a charitable organization. It's an exciting milestone that marks our coming of age. This transition will allow us to serve all communities more fully, to redefine the scope of our work, and to diversify the resources that sustain us.

At the heart of this transformation remains the vision of our founder, Sheila Kussner: that no one should face cancer alone. Her legacy continues to inspire us as we adapt to new realities and build a sustainable future.

Looking ahead, our focus is clear: to remain a trusted partner for patients, families, donors, and allied cancer organizations; to deepen our impact through innovation and collaboration; and to manage our resources wisely so that Hope & Cope stays strong for generations to come.

Thank you for your trust and support. Your belief in this mission makes every story of resilience possible.

With gratitude,

ROMAIN RIGAL

The Path of Resilience

When someone receives a cancer diagnosis, their world is completely transformed. This journey isn't linear. It contains twists and turns, and sometimes the need to circle back. That's why we use the "Path of Resilience" as a map that represents the complex and deeply human experience of living with cancer.

The path has six stages, each with its own emotional and practical needs.

What makes Hope & Cope unique is the coexistence of lived experience and professional expertise.

Our volunteers, many of which have cancer experience, serve as guides to provide support at every stage. Our staff provide the safe, evidence-based foundation that makes this support possible.

The path isn't only for those diagnosed with cancer. Caregivers, family members, and loved ones face their own challenges. When someone dies, bereaved family members need different kinds of support as they work through their grief and find meaning.

People used to talk in terms of "fighting" cancer or "winning battles." But today, living with cancer is about resilience. Every person's path is different, but at Hope & Cope, we make sure no one walks it alone.

1 **The Disruption:** Once someone learns they have cancer, nothing is ever the same again.

2 **Navigating the Fog:** A whirlwind of appointments, decisions, and foreign medical jargon creates intense anxiety and feelings of being lost.

3 **The Marathon:** Cancer treatments cause physical pain and fatigue on top of the constant emotional drain for patients and their loved ones.

4 **Finding Footing:** After a time, the initial crisis subsides and focus shifts to finding emotional support and connecting with others who understand the cancer experience.

5 **Redefining the Horizon:** Each person finds a new path forward. For the person with cancer, it can be remission, recurrence, or death. Caregivers remain caregivers, return to their role of companion, or become bereaved.

6 **The Echo:** Cancer remains a part of life and inspires some survivors and bereaved to give back.

“I just wanted to say thank you for everything. I am sad to be leaving the Mourning Cafe but grateful for all the support I received. I look forward to giving even a small amount of what Hope & Cope has provided to me. I look forward to see how I can help. I submitted the volunteer application a few weeks ago. Wishing you all the best. Thank you for all you do.”

— Lisa

“This is a note to say thank you to you and your most amazing team in the Hope & Cope gym and for the wonderful support you provided me, during my pre-hab workouts at Hope & Cope. I am so grateful for all your support that I wanted to express it in writing so that you might know unambiguously, how important your presence and program have been to my wellbeing in the last four months.”

— Virginia

“I lost my wonderful husband in october 2024 and although I reached out to several help/support groups, Hope & Cope is the group that responded to several of my needs. Your team is well organized, responds to my email in a timely way, sends calendars on a regular basis and thus far the leaders of two groups I have joined were very helpful.”

— Sharon

Stage 1

The Disruption

The word “cancer” changes everything in an instant. Life becomes “before” and “after,” leaving people feeling lost in a world that feels foreign and frightening.

This is where Hope & Cope steps in. Whether someone walks into our office during their hospital appointments or connects with us during their first overwhelming days, we’re there to say: “You are not alone.”

Our volunteers embody empathy. They understand that initial feeling of confusion and overwhelm because they’ve lived it or they’ve accompanied others at this stage. They serve as a calming presence, ready to listen and comfort as people tell their stories.

Sometimes it’s the person with cancer who finds us first. Other times, it can be a caregiver looking for support for their loved one or themselves. Our staff ensures that the first assessment identifies their immediate needs.

The disruption never fully ends. But in those first crucial moments, Hope & Cope provides what people need most: the assurance that someone will accompany them all the way through this new reality.

Services at this stage:

- **Immediate crisis support and assessment**
- **Resource navigation and information packets**
- **Library and resource centre access**
- **Connection to “En famille” for families with children**
- **Volunteer peer support and presence**



30 languages

300+ dedicated volunteers

25+ programs and services



“I arrived in Montreal in 2022 with no friends and family. Six months after my arrival, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I started treatment, and I really needed help. I needed to talk and I needed support. And that’s when I discovered Hope & Cope.

I remember my first day at the Wellness Centre. It was Halloween, my birthday. It was the best birthday of my life. I was surrounded by smiling women who supported me, women who had been through this before me and were doing very well.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the entire team. They were always there to listen, in good times and bad. Over tea in the garden, pampered in armchairs just like at home, I could even take a little nap. They knew when I was tired, when I was feeling down, or when I was happy. For me, it’s not just a centre, it’s my home, my family.

There are so many activities that we really need: healthy cooking sessions, exercises, jewelry workshops, tai chi, qi gong, acupuncture, and fabulous barbecues. It’s wonderful. We can find everything we need.

Many thanks to all the staff at Hope & Cope and to the volunteers for their generosity. Thanks to the Centre, I have made true friends who are now my family. I am no longer alone, I am happy.”

—Siham

Stage 2

Navigating the Fog

The appointments blur together. Oncologists, radiation specialists, social workers, and nurses deliver copious amounts of information. Patients and caregivers struggle to understand treatment options and their side effects. All this medical terminology can feel like a foreign language. It's overwhelming for many and paralyzing for some.

During this period of information and decision overload, Hope & Cope staff and volunteers serve as a grounding and calming presence. They help people organize their thoughts, prepare questions for doctors, and understand that what they're experiencing is normal. They've navigated this situation before, either for themselves or by helping others.

They help demystify the process, suggest what questions to ask, and most importantly, remind people that feeling overwhelmed doesn't mean they're not handling it well.

Our staff work alongside the medical teams, knowing when to refer someone to a nurse for medication questions or to social services for financial concerns.

Supporting the Supporters

Whether it's spouses, parents, family, friends, or even co-workers and bosses, caregivers face their own emotional turbulence during this stage. They're trying to be strong while managing logistics and processing their own fears and grief for the life they thought they'd have. Our volunteers recognize this parallel journey because many have been there too.

We connect caregivers to support groups where they can express feelings they can't share with their loved one.

The fog doesn't lift all at once, but with the right support, people begin to see a way forward. They learn to advocate for themselves, ask better questions, and make decisions aligned with their values rather than their fears.

Services at this stage:

- **Educational workshops and speaker series**
- **Wig and head covering services**
- **Question preparation assistance for medical appointments**
- **Hospital system navigation support**
- **Caregiver-specific support groups and resources**
- **Referrals to hospital social workers and financial counselors**
- **Links to financial assistance programs**

10,000+

individuals supported yearly





“At Hope & Cope, I met other women who had faced more advanced diagnoses. Their stories gave me perspective and strength, even if most of them had breast cancer, not cervical. I felt different, but I didn’t feel alone.”

—Lindsay

Stage 3

The Marathon

Treatment is a marathon that tests every dimension of a person's strength and endurance. Thirty radiation sessions, months of chemotherapy, potential surgery and recovery: these are all part of the cancer reality. Fatigue tires the body and depletes the spirit. This is when people need sustained energy, practical support, and reminders that, eventually, this will pass.

Our volunteers offer encouragement and walk alongside people through the longest, most challenging stretch of the path. In radiation oncology, where patients come daily for weeks, volunteers get to know each person's story, checking in with genuine care. They ask, "How are you feeling today? Do you need anything?"

Volunteers assist in wellness classes, help in the exercise room, and provide consistent presence during the most isolating aspects of treatment. When someone's too tired to talk, volunteers sit quietly. When they need a distraction, volunteers engage in gentle conversation. When they're scared about an upcoming scan, volunteers listen without trying to fix or minimize the fear.

Our kinesiologist and physiotherapist design personalized programs that help people safely maintain and rebuild strength. The prehab program prepares them for surgery and gives them agency when so much feels out of their control. Post-surgery rehabilitation addresses specific limitations. Throughout treatment, gentle exercise becomes a way to build upon the body's capacity for healing.

Treatment affects the whole person, so our support extends beyond the physical. Art therapy provides expression when words aren't enough. Acupuncture offers comfort when conventional medicine reaches its limits. Healthy cooking classes provide social connections and practical skill-building.

Volunteers prepare meals that are frozen and distributed at the hospital to patients and their families. For many, these meals are a tangible reminder that they're cared for. If someone is hospitalized, volunteers from our Hospital Visiting Team are available to offer comfort, companionship, and support.

The marathon stage tests patients, caregivers, and families. But when they feel supported, people discover reserves of strength they didn't know they had. They learn that endurance also means resting when needed and continuing when possible.

Services at this stage:

- **Prehab and post-surgery exercise programs**
- **Supervised fitness and rehabilitation**
- **Complementary therapies (acupuncture, massage, virtual reality)**
- **Physical activities (tai chi, qi gong, yoga, gentle workouts, etc.)**
- **Nutritional support and cooking classes**
- **Meal service and frozen meals**
- **Transportation assistance**
- **Volunteer companionship during treatments**
- **Hospital visits program**

50+	2000
families received meals	gym visits



“People with cancer are very vulnerable. If I can quickly bring them relief and comfort, that’s what I want to do.”
—Nga To, VOLUNTEER

Stage 4

Finding Footing

After the initial crisis and the intensity of treatment, a different kind of need emerges: the need for connection with others who truly understand. This is when people seek their "new normal." It's not the life they had expected before cancer, but a life that honours both their experience and their ongoing needs.

Hope & Cope volunteers act as community builders. They facilitate support groups and let participants express the same fears and emotions as those that came before them. Volunteers understand the impact of being understood without explanation.

Our staff create the safe environment for these connections. They train volunteer facilitators and provide backup support when difficult topics arise. They ensure groups remain focused on support and growth, not solely on dwelling on problems. When someone needs deeper support than group settings can provide, they also offer individual counselling.

Cancer changes people, and at this stage, they begin integrating that change instead of trying to go back to who they were before. Through art classes, people express feelings they couldn't articulate. During educational sessions, they gain knowledge and tools that help them navigate their new reality with greater confidence and control. In wellness activities, they rebuild confidence in their bodies.

The beauty of community building at Hope & Cope is its organic nature. People form genuine friendships. They celebrate each other's milestones and provide comfort during setbacks. The Wellness Centre becomes a home, a place where people feel they belong.

Community building extends beyond formal programs. It happens when someone finishing treatment calls to check on a newly diagnosed person, and when caregivers exchange phone numbers after a support group. It's also visible when former patients bring friends to the annual Survivorship Day Celebration. These are signs of the community taking care of itself, with Hope & Cope providing the environment where these connections flourish.

Services at this stage:

- **Support groups and workshops for people with cancer and caregivers**
- **Peer mentoring programs**
- **Hospital visits program**
- **Wellness Centre community activities and classes**
- **Creative arts and expression programs**
- **Social events and community gatherings**
- **Volunteer opportunities for those ready to give back**
- **Professional counselling and psychosocial support**

500+ participants to lectures and special events

600+ participants in peer mentoring and support groups

2000 participants in non-physical activities (choir, art, cooking, reiki, etc.)



“I was diagnosed with Stage 3 rectal cancer in December 2024. I’ve endured 28 rounds of radiation and 6 rounds of chemotherapy, and I’m still in treatment.

Throughout the long winter months, coming to Hope & Cope really helped me. The volunteers are amazing and you meet a lot of different people who all have the same thing in common: cancer. We do talk about it and exchange info, but it is also a relief to get out of the doctor’s office and socialize. I’m hopeful for the future and I look forward to getting my life back very soon. Life is precious.”

— Sarah

Stage 5

Redefining the Horizon

At this stage, multiple paths are possible. For many, treatment ends with clear scans and the label "in remission." But survivorship brings its own challenges: returning to work while managing fatigue, rebuilding relationships affected by the cancer experience, and living with the ongoing awareness that cancer could return. It's a common fear that Hope & Cope helps to manage.

Support groups such as Beyond Cancer address these unique concerns. Participants learn and share coping skills for managing daily life, discuss workplace accommodations, and explore how their cancer experience has changed their priorities and perspectives. They're not "cured" and pretending nothing happened. They're learning to integrate a significant life experience into their ongoing story.

The Recurrence Path

When cancer returns, people often find themselves back at Stage 1 (The Disruption) but with their own lived experience of having walked this path before. The shock feels different this time. Sometimes it's harder because of dashed hopes, and sometimes easier because they know they have the needed resilience to pull through.

Hope & Cope staff provide continuity for people living a recurrence. Volunteers who supported someone through their initial treatment welcome them back with the same warmth and support. Familiar faces bring hope where there could otherwise be despair.

The Palliative Path

When treatment shifts from curing to comforting, Hope & Cope's palliative care support offers dignity and connection. Our volunteers provide companionship for patients and families, helping them face the difficult reality that cancer will be part of someone's dying process.

There is no false hope or denial. Instead, we provide comfort, connection, and vivid experiences during the person's remaining time. Virtual reality sessions offer a way to "visit" meaningful places. Art therapy allows the creation of a legacy. We work to ensure that family time feels meaningful and not like a hospital visit.

The Caregiver Transition

Caregivers also redefine their future at this stage. Some are able to shed the role of "caregiver" to reclaim their identity as a spouse, parent, or friend as their loved one enters remission. Others become bereaved, facing grief while also losing their sense of purpose and daily structure. Our programs recognize these parallel paths with specialized support for each transition.

Services at this stage:

- **Survivorship: Beyond Cancer groups, return-to-work programs, ongoing wellness support**
- **Recurrence: Renewed access to all services, specialized recurrence support**
- **Palliative: Comfort care, family support, legacy programs, complementary therapies**
- **Caregiver Support: Anticipatory grief counselling, transition support, caregiver-specific groups**

400+ families supported in the palliative care unit (PCU)

400+ participants in bereavement groups

1000 participants in PCU activities (art, massage, VR goggles, grief counseling, etc.)







“When I help in the palliative care unit, I can’t receive anything in return and I have no expectations. It’s liberating and more rewarding.”

—Marc-André, VOLUNTEER

Stage 6

The Echo

Cancer never truly ends. It remains through the rest of someone's life in profound or subtle ways. For someone with cancer, it might be heightened anxiety during routine checkups or a change of perspective about what matters most. Bereaved family members learn to live with love and loss simultaneously. The ongoing question of how to make meaning from such an experience remains for everyone touched by cancer.

Many of our most dedicated volunteers are people who first came to us in crisis. They received support during their darkest moments, and chose to transform their experience into service for others.

When someone dies from cancer, Hope & Cope doesn't end its support. Our bereavement program recognizes that grief is not a problem to be solved but a natural response to profound loss that deserves companionship and understanding.

Trained volunteers make condolence calls to ensure people know they're not forgotten. Support groups create an accepting environment for the difficult emotions of grief, including guilt, relief, anger, and love.

The Echo stage is where people discover how their cancer experience has changed them and how they want to honour that transformation. Some become volunteers, some advocate for better cancer care, some simply live more intentionally. There's no right way to make meaning, but Hope & Cope provides the community where people can explore these questions together.

Former participants often return for special events because Hope & Cope represents an important chapter of their lives. They want to see how the organization has grown, to reconnect with people who supported them, and to offer encouragement to those just beginning the path they've travelled.

Services at this stage:

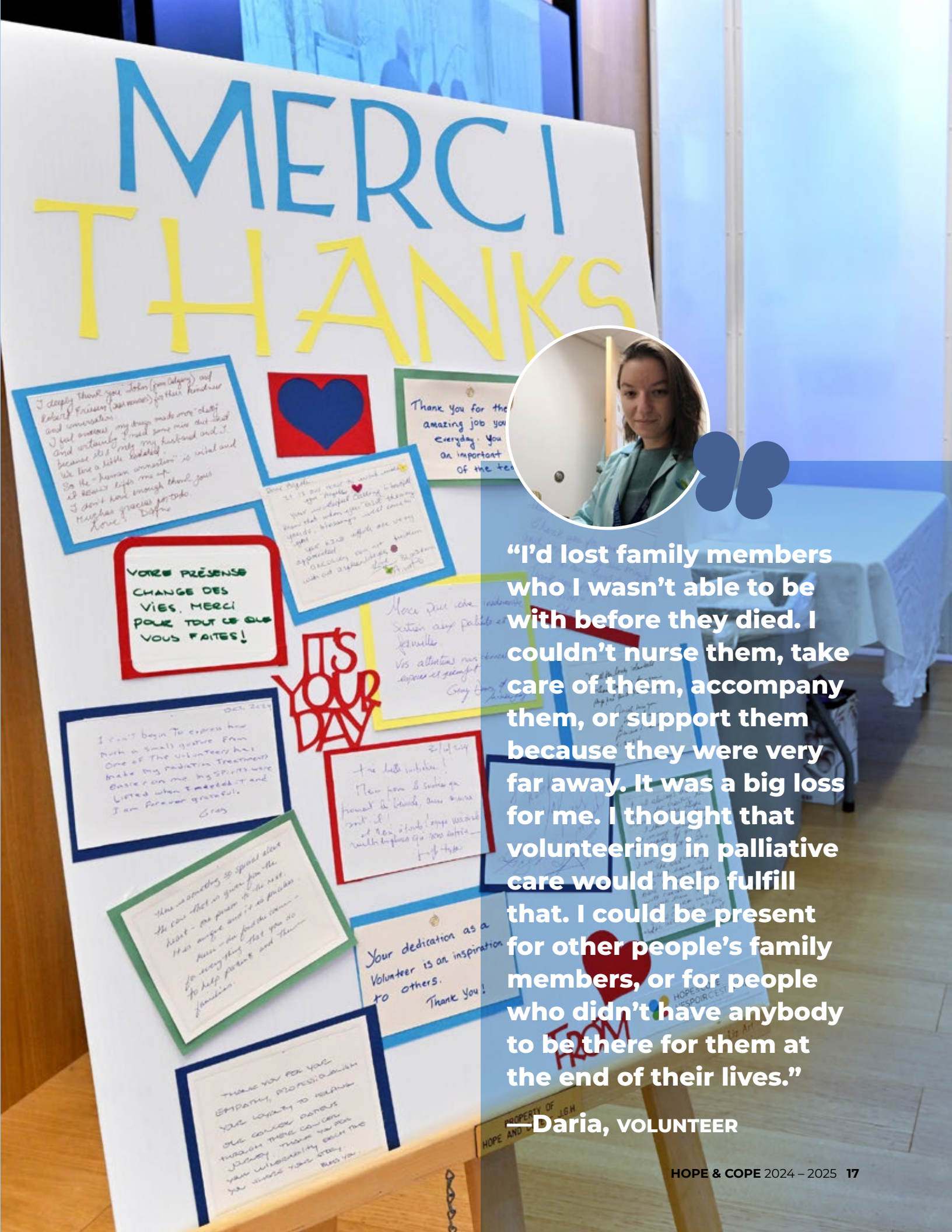
- **Bereavement support groups and individual counselling**
- **Volunteer training and placement for those ready to give back**
- **Alumni events and ongoing community connection**

60+ **new volunteers**

18% **volunteers who've had cancer**

24% **volunteers who have a family member with cancer**





“I’d lost family members who I wasn’t able to be with before they died. I couldn’t nurse them, take care of them, accompany them, or support them because they were very far away. It was a big loss for me. I thought that volunteering in palliative care would help fulfill that. I could be present for other people’s family members, or for people who didn’t have anybody to be there for them at the end of their lives.”

—Daria, VOLUNTEER

The Science of Compassion

Hope & Cope's effectiveness is grounded in rigorous research that demonstrates the power of psychosocial support in cancer care.

Through partnerships with McGill University and the Christine and Herschel Victor/Hope & Cope Chair in Psychosocial Oncology, held by Carmen G. Loiselle, Ph.D., our community participates in groundbreaking research.

Research ensures our programs evolve based on evidence rather than assumptions. When studies show that peer support reduces anxiety, we strengthen our volunteer programs. When research identifies gaps in caregiver support, we develop new initiatives. When data reveal the long-term impact of community-based programs, we can advocate for their importance in comprehensive cancer care.

Through research, we inform and transform how society responds to cancer and its impact on people, groups, and communities.

9
peer-reviewed publications

10
Lead or Co-Lead on 10 active studies

10
peer-reviewed conference presentations





Looking Forward

After more than four decades, Hope & Cope continues to evolve. The Path of Resilience represents our commitment to meeting people wherever they are in their experience with cancer.

As we look forward, we see opportunities to align our work with the provincial strategy to ensure seamless access to support services, facilitate smooth transitions, and integrate comprehensive care throughout the entire cancer journey. Our research partnerships position us to pilot new interventions and share effective practices with cancer centres worldwide.

The foundation of our future remains solid: the partnership between people who have lived the cancer experience and professionals who provide the expertise to make their wisdom accessible to others. This combination of heart and science, experience and evidence, creates the conditions where resilience can flourish even in the most challenging circumstances.

There are many ways to become part our community. Through our programs and support groups, individuals can find the specific resources they need at every stage of their journey. Volunteer opportunities across all service areas allow community members to contribute their time and talents in meaningful ways.

We aim to support every person who walks through our doors as we accompany them on their Path of Resilience. Together, we're creating a community where cancer's impact extends beyond individual survival to encompass healing, growth, and service that benefits everyone touched by cancer.

Because nobody should have to face cancer alone.

13 staff members

100% funded by donations

20,000 hours provided by volunteers





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