

# THE Voice of Friends

We Help People With Cancer

## FRIENDS TOGETHER IS IMPORTANT

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**Friends Together is a non-profit 501(c)3. Our mission is to help people with cancer in northeast Michigan. We operate solely on donations & fundraising. We recently began an endowment fund. See page 9.**



**Friends Together**

[www.friendstogethermi.org](http://www.friendstogethermi.org)

I've been in healthcare for 31 years. There have been many changes throughout my career. At a friend's encouragement, I moved over to the Alpena Cancer Center several years ago.

There were many new procedures, technology, and tests to learn. Aside from all of that, I needed to become familiar with the medications used to treat oncology patients. Part of my training was becoming comfortable responding to patients who have adverse reactions to their chemotherapy. Thankfully these reactions are infrequent. But when the rare reaction to medication occurs, our cancer team of healthcare professionals spring into action like a well-oiled machine.

While the technical part of my job is important, I find that my ability to connect with patients is my true gift. I understand and respect that each person receiving cancer treatment is vulnerable. Treatment can be scary. I am there to reassure and

(continued on page 2)



## Have a *Cancer Diagnosis?*

Contact Friends Together! You do not have to travel the cancer journey alone. When you walk through our door you open a world of hope and joy. We have traveled a similar journey. We understand. Let us help.

FOR DETAILS CONTACT [talktous@friendstogethermi.org](mailto:talktous@friendstogethermi.org)

# Five Loaves and Two Fish

Recently I was able to reflect on this Scripture story with a new perspective. In this account a young boy had five loaves of bread and two fish, a rather small supply to nourish 5000 people. He made his offer that seemed insignificant, but in the end there was a 'miracle of abundance' to sustain the many. He had enough.

Twenty five years ago I was that little boy. I humbly began what was to be a loving and caring community of friends. In 1996, I wasn't sure if I had the gift, talent, knowledge and passion to nourish those coping with a cancer experience. The miracle in that moment was not only did I have 'enough' but those who joined me in this mission of love, also had enough. Together we brought to the table just enough to experience the abundance of care we celebrate today. We too had enough. We too have nourished thousands of friends coping with cancer.

For tomorrow and years to come, I encourage you to join our mission and celebrate the abundance we have shared. I am so very grateful to this giving community and as I look forward it is with certainty we will continue to have 'enough' for the next generation of Friends Together.

Together we make a difference every day.



(continued from page 1, Chelle Thomas)

educate. I am there to answer their questions and help them feel more comfortable.

I try to be a breath of fresh air, an injection of positivity. I use my nursing skills to take care of their treatment and my heart and soul to take care of the person. As a nurse I hope to be a 'safe zone' for patients to share with me. I offer myself as support, especially in these isolated times. I am honored that I can be beside each patient to provide comfort when their loved ones cannot.

Throughout it all I am a steadfast believer in the importance of Friends Together. I enjoy volunteering at

the Friends Together fundraisers. I know my helping to raise money will benefit the people I see each day in the cancer center. Whether it is a gas card, a ride to an appointment, a wig, or taking part in one of the Friends Together Cancer Support Groups, I know those dealing with cancer have access to great healthcare and support.

~Chelle Thomas, RN BSN

**Free support  
is a call away**

**(989)356-3231 (phone)**

**(989) 354-0813 (fax)**

**talktous@friendstogethermi.org**

*We listen.*

*We understand.*

*You are not alone.*

"If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else." – Booker T. Washington

## Welcome Megan & Chris

Help us welcome two new facilitators to our team.

Megan Miller is the facilitator of our newest support group, Good Grief. Some of you may remember Megan from Thursday night's Living with Loss . Megan left that role due to work and school conflicts. Now back in Alpena, Megan is happy to be back and involved with Friends Together. Her grief group is on Tuesdays at 10am.

Chris Powley will be taking over the facilitation of one of our longest running support groups, Tuesday Night Live! Following retirement from his role as a high school teacher and counselor for West Branch, Chris and his wife moved back to Alpena. One of the first things he did was look for a way to give back to the community. We are thrilled to know Chris will begin in October on Tuesdays at 6pm.

**Megan is back!**



## Need help?

Are you finding that getting to and from your oncology appointments is difficult? Is the financial burden adding stress to your life? Are you alone and would like someone to drive you to appointments?

Our drivers live in Alpena, Presque Isle, Rogers City, and Ossineke. We are available to support you.

For more information, call (989) 356-3231.

**Meet Chris (pictured with Jo). Chris will be joining our team in October.**



## Cancer In the time of Covid-19

During the last months, we were often reminded that cancer doesn't pause for anyone, regardless of what is going on in the world. People still needed to talk, to be heard. The barriers to treatment seemed to grow. Yet, Friends Together found new and creative ways to help while observing current safety precautions. As we all continue forward, learning the new normal of the world, know that you can contact us. You are not alone.

# There's nothing like fresh produce to get you thinking

I recently made a large pot of homemade tomato sauce from a beautiful gift of fresh tomatoes. These were some gorgeous tomatoes! As I happily shocked the tomatoes to easily remove their skins, I was amazed at how easy they peeled and how firm and fresh they were. To the peeled tomatoes I added freshly grown basil, thyme, rosemary, oregano, and parsley. The tomatoes cooked down to a beautiful sauce. It was a very satisfying and wonderful feeling to create something I could enjoy and share.

Yet, as I watched the simmering sauce an odd annoyance overcame me. The tiny little bubbles rose to the top of the sauce and seemed to pop in slow motion. Each minor explosion brought with it a bit of sputtering sauce. While most of the sauce stayed in the pot, some spilled out onto nearby surfaces. That is when I realized the sauce reminded me of how I sometimes feel. My emotions can be so tightly held that they simmer under the surface until little explosive pops splatter bits of emotion all over others.



I was watching the sauce imitate how I feel inside. Curious, I immediately talked it through in my head while scribbling notes on paper. As my notes took shape, I realized I have anger simmering within me, just beneath the surface. So many changes have happened in the world lately. Perhaps I am not adjusting as smoothly as I think I am.

I learned there are many common triggers for anger. Injustice, stress, financial issues, family or personal problems, traumatic events, feeling unheard or undervalued, hunger, chronic pain, fear or panic are just a *few* catalysts. Most of us can certainly relate to one or more of these triggers. Top of my trigger list are people I love who are dealing with serious health issues (and all the ancillary issues that come with illness). Next, social media seems to be beating me down with negative talk that seems to only be interested in accusations and blame. Neither of these things occurred because of anything I did to instigate them. Yet they impact me and build up.

It was like the fable highlighted in the book 'Who Moved My Cheese.' As the story goes, four characters live in a maze and they all love cheese. When the cheese disappears, two of them, Scurry and Sniff, enthusiastically head out into the maze to find new cheese. No problem for them, they adapted quickly. They adjusted to the situation and moved along. The other two, Hem and Hall, felt betrayed and complained. They didn't respond to change well and spent their time and energy hoping the old cheese would return. Hall realizes the old cheese likely won't return so he sets out into the maze in search for new cheese. He's adapted and decides to take back control and even writes what he learns on the walls hoping that Hem will follow him. Eventually Hall discovers new cheese.

Cheese is the metaphor for what you want to have in life and how outside forces can alter our piece of the world. The core message is this: change is constant, often without our input, so we must choose to adapt or spend our days lamenting the change. The quicker we adapt and adjust the more satisfied we will be. It is really more of a personal choice. Who do you want to be? How do you want to live? I want to be the person who positively adjusts to the new circumstance, thereby reframing my world, thoughts, and actions to meet my needs. I want to positively move forward, progressing to my ideal.

My daughter just gifted me some beautiful sleek dark green zucchini. I wonder what I'll learn from them.

~ *Lesslee Dort*, Program Manager & Patient Advocate

# The Gift of Kindness and Love

## Bald and Beautiful

Have you ever wanted to do something for a loved one going through treatment for cancer? So did Denise. Her friend was diagnosed with cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy. Denise lives far away, but wanted to help. So she asked her friend to send her some of her hair after it was cut.

Denise taught herself how to line the rim of a ball cap with groupings of her friend's hair. By doing this, Denise's friend now has a hat to wear with her very own hair sticking down from the back and sides. All she has to do is put the cap on and she has her hair again.

What an amazing gift! But Denise didn't stop there. She posted a 'How To' video on Facebook so others could learn to do this too.

Oftentimes, we are at a loss for what to do to help someone we love going through a difficult time. This is just one idea someone came up with to show their love and stand beside a friend.

There are many ways people show love and help. Feel free to share the gifts of love you received. Email us at [talktous@friendstogethermi.org](mailto:talktous@friendstogethermi.org).

## Make your own wig hat

This winter, Friends Together will be holding a workshop to teach others how to make their own wig hat. The class will be free, though donations will be accepted to offset cost.

Hair product and tools will be provided. If interested in the class, please contact Lesslee and let her know. Give her a call at (989) 356-3231 or email her at [lesslee@friendstogethermi.org](mailto:lesslee@friendstogethermi.org).



**Bundles of hair, crimp beads, and the tools Denise used to give her friend back her hair.**

## You Are Not Alone

**Friends Together supports you and your decisions on how to treat your diagnosis in the best way possible for you. We are here to listen, help and support.**



**Meet Denise. This picture was taken from a video she posted on Facebook to help teach others to do this themselves.**

# A BIG Thank You to all our volunteer drivers

It is interesting how volunteers and support group members get involved in Friends Together. We all have our own story on how we begin helping those who have been affected by a cancer diagnosis.



Please meet one of these dedicated, volunteer drivers - Jerry Kamyszek! Jerry has been driving for Friends Together for many years. In a recent conversation, Jerry shared with me that he began his "volunteer career" several years ago at St. John's hospital working in their coffee shop. He was still working his full-time job and wanted to help others and so his volunteer work began. He found great joy in meeting people, engaging in random conversation and just making a difference by offering a warm smile and helping hand. Upon his retirement, he moved back to his northern Michigan roots. He said he heard a commercial on the radio that Friends Together was looking for volunteer drivers in the Rogers City area. This is when his journey volunteering for Friends Together began and he began providing rides for cancer patients to and



Jerry Kamyszek

## Support is just a call away

from their critical medical appointments. Often, Jerry will drive patients in his own vehicle taking patients from Rogers City to their medical appointment destination. Other times he will drive one of our 2 transportation vans. Jerry has travelled many miles from Rogers City to Alpena, Hillman, Traverse City, Midland and Ann Arbor.

Jerry said, "when I think about how my volunteer efforts impact and help others, I reflect on the fact that someday, I may be the one who needs assistance."

Jerry likes meeting new people, loves driving new roads and exploring areas all around him that he would never, otherwise, see. Each long winding road leads to a person who could just use a little help...like a very important ride... It is at this time that Jerry helps them on their "cancer journey".

If you are interested in being a volunteer driver for Friends Together, please call 989-356-3231.

Shelly Gibbs, Transportation Coordinator

## Covid-19 Van Precautions

- **Van will be sanitized with each use.**
- **Masks are available for drivers & passengers.**
- **If passenger displays symptoms of illness, the scheduled transport may be cancelled or rescheduled.**
- **If driver displays symptoms of illness, a replacement driver will be sought.**



# Flowers!

# Events coming up

Have you ever wondered how we keep all the cheerful flowers around our building looking so good? Why we have them most amazing volunteers!

Marie Gilmet-Dully has been consistently watering and pruning the red and purple flowers that fill our window boxes for years. Without her constant attention we would not have such a beautiful frame for our building.

Alida Bywater comes everyday to check on our newly installed Inspiration Garden of Hope. She not only waters but feeds and fills in spots with flowers from her own garden. Her dedication made the garden not only beautiful to look at, but a peaceful place to ponder.

Christy Riemenschneider is our landscaper/gardener extraordinaire. She made our vision a reality. Her dedication to our new garden and the surrounding landscaping has made a world of difference.

Please pay us a visit. Stop and smell the flowers or take rest in our garden. We are here for you.

## September

18 - Fall Festival of Friends  
Turkey Dinner  
@  
Connie's Café

**Clockwise from top: Marie, Christy, and Alida. The volunteers who make our garden grow.**



# Weekly Support Groups

Please note: Support groups meet at Friends Together, unless otherwise noted.

Updates will be posted on our Facebook page whenever necessary. Call with any questions. (989)356-3231

## All Friends Together Programs are Open to the Public and Free of Charge

### **Friends Together North - Rogers City**

Meet others in the Rogers City area who are coping with a variety of cancer issues, share resources and information, discuss family issues and coping strategies. Make new friends who understand. Our evening is filled with comfort and fellowship.

**Dates:** First & Third Monday of each month **Time:** 6:00 p.m.

**Location:** Presque Isle District Library, 181 E. Erie Street, Rogers City, MI 49779

### **Good Grief - Alpena**

This group is designed for those journeying through grief after the loss of a loved one. We understand what you are going through. We encourage you to join others who are also coping with the loss of a loved one. Grief can be overwhelming; you are not alone. Feel free to bring a friend or family member.

**Dates:** Every Tuesday **Time:** 10:00 a.m.

### **Mindful Movements for Healing - Alpena**

Mindful Movements for Healing is designed to nourish, inspire and empower each woman healing from and dealing with cancer. We welcome women (all ages and abilities) touched by cancer to this gentle and therapeutic movement-based experience.

*For women only.*

**Dates:** Tuesday (call for dates) **Time:** Noon

### **Caregivers Connect Cancer Support Group - Alpena**

Meet others who share your experience as a caregiver. Recognize your needs and discover ways to care for YOU. Learn about cancer issues and how to partner in your loved-one's care. Refreshments and snacks provided.

**Dates:** Every Tuesday **Time:** 6:00 p.m.

### **Friends Together Live! Cancer Support Group - Alpena**

Meet others who are coping with a variety of cancer issues, share resources and information, discuss family issues and coping strategies. Make new friends who understand. Know you are not alone. Our evening is filled with comfort and fellowship.

**Dates:** Every Tuesday **Time:** 6:00 p.m.

### **Guys Like Us Cancer Support Group - Alpena**

Morning coffee crew of men who are coping with cancer. Join us in discussion, or just listen. This group is informal and meets to provide encouragement and support. For men only.

**Dates:** Every Wednesday

**Time:** 10:00 a.m.

### **Women on Wednesdays (WOW) Cancer Support Group - Alpena**

A program of support and wellness for women of *all* ages and backgrounds touched by cancer. We are stronger when each step of the cancer journey is shared. Empower yourself, unite with others, share the journey, and find your voice.

**Dates:** Every Wednesday

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

### **Living with Loss Support Group - Alpena**

This group is designed for those journeying through grief after the loss of a loved one. Grief is overwhelming; you are not alone. We understand and encourage you to join others who are also coping with the loss of a loved one. Come meet others on a similar journey. Feel free to bring a friend or family member.

**Dates:** Every Thursday

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

Friends Together programs are offered in partnership with:



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## support programs

As you can see from the list on page 8, Friends Together has several cancer support groups. Those are the only ways we help make the cancer journey easier.

Beginning this fall, Friends Together will be offering Comfort Bags and Patient Planners to all newly diagnosed patients at our local cancer center.

New are our **C101 Patient Planners**. A grant from First Federal Legacy Foundation made these very relevant 3-ring binders a reality.

Designed and developed by cancer survivors, the binders, and accompanying expandable file, will help cancer patients manage and organize their healthcare. Sections include: Questions to Ask, Medicine & Symptom Tracker, Managing Costs, Mind, Body & Connections, and Resources.

The Planner is nearly 200 pages of useable material that can be tailored to each patient..

We are aiming to have the program ready in October. A coupon will be given to each new cancer patient seen at our cancer center. The coupon can be redeemed for a bag and a planner.

The **Comfort Bags**, while not a new program, are now going to be more widely distributed. In the past, only chemotherapy patients had regular access to these handy little bags filled with goodies. Recent grant dollars have allowed us to expand the program to include all who are diagnosed. Filled with a variety of items previous patients have told us made treatment easier, our Comfort Bags will become your constant companion when going to the cancer center.

Both the bag and the planner are free of charge.



**Thank you to  
all who came to  
celebrate our 25th  
Anniversary with us!**

**The face of a winner and a giver.  
Thank you, Tom.**



## Need to Talk?

Friends Together is staffed with compassionate individuals who have personal experience with cancer. We understand what you are feeling and experiencing. While your journey is unique to you, we have walked a similar path and know how to navigate the terrain.

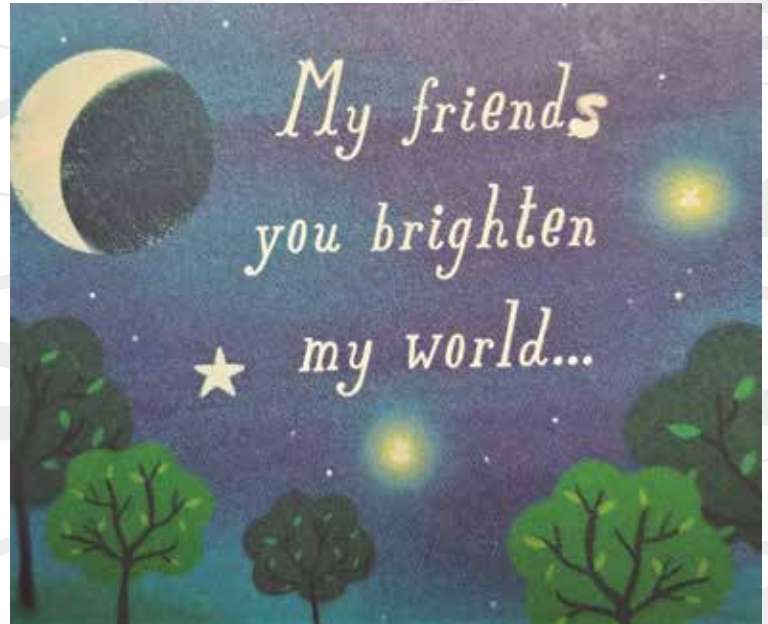
Please contact us or just stop in to talk. We are here during the week from 8:30am to 4:30pm. Plus, we have seven (7) different ongoing support groups each week. One is sure to fit your needs. See page 8 for a full list.

# Gratitude

I can not thank you enough for the amazing support you give. From the wig I received when my hair fell out to the gas cards to help in my traveling to treatment/doctor visits, overnight stay when I had out of town surgery, chemo care bag and the kindness of the staff. I can't begin to express how wonderful you are!

Thank you! ❤️

~S.K.



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# In Memory and In Honor

We remember those who have touched our lives. Often, family and friends make a donation in their name. Please contact us if you have any questions about this listing or would like someone to appear on a future newsletter.

## In Memory

Gordon Burns  
Dawn Burns  
Betty Smigelski  
Cindy LeDuc  
David Fray  
Tom Render  
Dave Hillert  
Theresa Szczerowski  
Vicki Cherrette  
Mary Jo Milostan  
Bertha Adair  
Irene Susan Talbot  
Donna Cross

Esperanza Medina Mazutti  
Fred Medina Mazutti  
Robert Hunt  
Leone Duncan  
Paul Arthur Dault  
Tam Kennard  
Carl Pilarski  
Barb Skaluba  
Diane Bradbury  
Mike Wiedbrauk  
Laura Coleman  
Helen Reed  
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Thank you Friends and Volunteers!



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Friends Together & Connie's Café present

# Fall Festival of Friends Traditional Turkey Dinner

Take Out Drive-Thru

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@ Connie's Cafe

4:00-6:30pm Adults \$15 / Children \$7

Proceeds to Benefit Friends Together

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