

WHAT'S INSIDE:



Catch up on the latest gings on at Friends Together. **PAGE 2**



Re-entry blues? Turn the page for tips to get back into reality. **PAGE 4**



Are you traveling for treatment? We can help in more ways than one. **PAGE 8**



we help people with cancer, and their loved ones too

THE voice OF Friends

Big gestures

from small bodies

Have you ever wondered, "what can I do?" If so, take a look at these amazing young men

ISSUE NO. 3
FALL
2023

These boys know how to honor someone they love. In fact, they have such strong, beautiful feelings for their Grammy, they chose to spend their weekend camping at Campers' Cove raising money in her honor.



These four enterprising souls set up a lemonade stand and got to work and raised over \$100.00. Then they brought their hard earned money to Friends Together to help others with cancer.

Because of their efforts, they gave the best gift to others in honor of their grandmother. We will turn that money into gas cards to help our friends and neighbors get to their cancer appointments, fuel for our vans to transport patients to treatment, a night at a hotel while traveling downstate for treatment, or, a comfort bag to make someone feel a bit better during treatment.

There are always ways to help others and honor your loved ones at the same time. What will you do?

SAVE THE DATE! kettle nation popcorn

We have confirmed the date for this year's drive-thru popcorn sales - December 15, 2023. All you need to do is drive through, select what you want, pay, receive your yummy popcorn, and drive off. That simple. You don't even have to get out of your car!

This year's flavors will include: kettle corn, caramel corn, chocolate, vanilla latte, and any combination of the above. Kettle corn will be \$10/bag and the rest of the flavors will be \$15/bag. Pre-orders available and encouraged for new flavors.

Drive through on December 15, from 10am to 6pm at Friends Together on the corner of Prentiss and State.

NEWS & NOTES

from the desk of the executive director



Dear Friends,

I hope you had a fun and safe summer. Thank you to all who attended our summer events: Annual Pig Roast, Drive Thru Fundraiser and Scramble for Friends ...just to name a few! As we move into fall, the season brings fresh, new projects and some exciting changes around the office.

First, I am happy to announce that Friends Together is the recipient of a Summer 2023 Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan (CFNEM) Community Impact Grant! These funds are designated to the enhancement of our new lineup of programs. Living Sense-ibly with Friends is a weekly, program to promote healing and well-being utilizing the 5 senses. Facilitated by staff and local professionals in their respective fields, participants will be guided in utilizing the 5 senses in hands-on opportunities. Every week of each

month will have a different focus – journaling, education, food, and art. These new programs will be offered on Tuesdays and are open to anyone that has experienced cancer: patient, loved one, family member, employees, neighbor, friends, clinical staff, social workers, etc. As always, Friends Together programs are free of charge.

Next, we added Traci Boyle of Lady of the Lake Yoga to our facilitator team! Traci comes to Friends Together as a RYTT200 yoga instructor specializing in Yin, Vinyasa, and guided meditation. She offers Deep Breath Yoga & Sound Bath for woman cancer survivors right here at the Friends Together office. This program is made possible by our long-time partner, Zonta.

Lastly, Friends Together has added a Community Engagement Coordinator to the staff. Our Founder, Judy Burns, has moved into this part-time role and will be traveling throughout the 6-county service region to establish support groups and seek new partnerships. Because transportation is often a barrier to accessing care, this effort will extend programing to underserved areas – meeting folks where they are at.

When the season changes, it often brings new opportunities. I am grateful for your on-going support of Friends Together as we continue to provide new and enriching programing and services to our Friends experiencing cancer. We cannot do it alone.

Warm regards,

Melissa Burns, Executive Director

Tuesday Topics

October 10, 2023

Sleep! It is more than just closing your eyes at night. Learn how to get a good night's sleep and why it is so important. Jane Bailey RRT, RPSGT, MyMichigan Medical Center Alpena

November 14, 2023

Hospice Care, explained What is it, when does someone sign up for it? Does all other care stop? And what about palliative care? Join us learn what it is and when it should be considered. Wendy Servia from Hospice of Michigan

December 12, 2023

Herbology & Naturopathy Join us as we learn about person oriented healthcare and how natural products can work together with western medicine to help what ails us. Maryam Blackeagle is a retired nurse and herbalist who now focuses her time making herbal medicinal products and educating clients.

impact report

your donations at work

Ever wonder what we do with the money we receive?

We help people with cancer, and their loved ones, too.

It is that simple and that complex at the same time. While there are many unmeasurable ways we support people during their cancer journey, during confidential support groups, compassionate one-on-one patient advocacy, and camaraderie with people who understand and have 'walked the walk'.

Below is an example of how we support families and individuals experiencing the cancer.



65,372 miles driven

annually, to transport people to cancer care.

\$66,685 gas cards given

annually, to help offset the cost of getting to cancer treatment.

\$31,095.55 spent on lodging

annually, to subsidize the cost of hotels during out-of-town cancer appointments.

59 planners & comfort bags

given annually, to help organize and soften the cancer treatment experience.

288 opportunities for group support

annually, to help patients and families deal with cancer and all its impacts.

All in all, we've helped approximately **344** persons during the 2023 fiscal year -

all because of your dollars and donations.

*Do you or someone you know have a cancer diagnosis? You do not need to walk the cancer journey alone. Call us **989.356.3231** or visit our website at www.friendstogethermi.org for support. Email us at talktous@friendstogethermi.org*



5 Ways to help non-profits

1 Make & donate lap blankets

There is nothing like a warm lap blanket to make everything just a little easier. Handmade blankets are given to those with cancer in our communities nearly every day.

2 Donate something from their wishlist

Many charitable organizations have wishlists. Some big items, some small. If you like to put your money to work in a tangible way - check it out.

3 Do your own mini-fundraiser

Raise money within your circle of friends, family, and neighbors then present to a non-profit in honor or memory of someone.

4 Encourage your friends to donate

Do you give every month or year to an organization? It feels good and can benefit your taxes, share the good news and encourage

5 Name them in your will

or divert your IRA dividends to them. Ask your accountant or attorney how both you and the charity benefit.

CONQUER POST-VACATION BLUES

It's your choice



LESSLEE DORT

When on vacation, I sometimes dream of running away. Wouldn't it be wonderful to just stay in this holiday fantasy world, pick up the real estate ads, buy my perfect new home and not look back? Begin afresh. No one knows me. A brand-new slate.

When in this pleasantly unreal state, it never occurs to me that if I moved to any of these vacation locations I would no longer actually be on vacation; all the challenges, the chores, and many (if not more) headaches would transfer with me because I cannot leave myself behind.

I knew I should feel refreshed and rejuvenated after time away. Yet, despite my efforts, I would simply want to cry during the last part of vacation. I thought I was hiding my feelings from others. I was wrong. When I realized that my reaction to end-of-vacation was hurting those I love, I quickly understood it was time to work on this part of myself. I took control.

I needed to understand why I felt like I did as I prepared to come back home. After some consideration, I realized I, alone, was causing the problem and needed to learn that I ultimately control the demands of my time and the business of my daily life. I could choose how much to put on my plate.

We exercise our freedom when on vacation. We do what we want, even if it's nothing. We change our behaviors when on vacation. We often become less rigid and less routine based. We say no to things that displease us. We actively pursue enjoyable activities. We are active. We decide. Our sleep is less troubled.

Re-entry blues materialize when these seemingly free days come to an end and life no longer feels like our own. We intimately feel the loss of control starting once again.

If you suffer from re-entry issues, please try to find a

lasting solution. Don't let this condition steal your ability to absorb the full benefits of a good get-away or negatively impact your relationships with others.

I eventually found relief from the busyness of life by implementing a few straightforward pre-trip preparation tasks and post-trip mindfulness techniques. They may work for you.

Clean the house before you go. Just straighten up, don't come home to a mess that only adds stress.

Build in time to breathe. Somewhere along the way, our culture/society started rewarding productivity for productivities' sake. The problem doesn't necessarily lie there. I believe it is in how we define productivity. It isn't just getting stuff done. You are being productive when you allow your body, mind, and soul to recharge. It may seem like passive productivity, but it's critical to health.

Stop shining a light on only the stressors and less desirable situations in your life, it's not the entirety of your story. There are positives within your moments.

Concentrate on the good in your life, fix the rest. Vow to release or rework the parts of your life that are stressful. Many are self-imposed and therefore can be removed from your life at your say.

Flip your focus. If you start to feel blue as vacation nears the end, start celebrating how well you were able to unplug and fully immerse yourself during your time away. Celebrate how successfully you detached and recharged. Jot down the special moments to remind yourself later. Caption pictures. Discuss with yourself or your partner takeaways from the trip, things you've learned, and aspects of yourself you've discovered.

Manage expectations upon return, take it easy on yourself and others. Mentally prepare and remind yourself that for the first few days you'll be ramping back up to speed. But in no time, if you choose to, you can be back into your normal busy hectic life with fresh fuel from your rest.

Re-entry issues occur less often now. And if I employ the techniques I know work for me, I snap out of it and back into the joy of the moment easier each time. Try not to give up your vacation days before you need to.

grief group

Each Tuesday at 10am, Friends Together holds a peer-to-peer grief support group.

This group is designed to



The human spirit is stronger than anything that can happen to it.

CC Scott



allow each participant a safe place to work through this time of complicated feelings.

The group is run by trained staff and focuses on emotional support, sharing experiences, education and practical activities.

Call Lesslee at (989) 356-3231 for more information or to talk.



HOLIDAYS & GRIEF

how to find moments of joy

The holiday season is often portrayed as a time of joy, celebration, and togetherness. However, for those who have experienced grief and loss, this time of year can be particularly challenging. While everyone else seems to be immersed in festivities, those coping with loss may find themselves navigating a complex emotional landscape.

Grief doesn't adhere to a calendar, and it can intensify during the holidays. Whether you're grieving the loss of a loved one, a relationship, a job, or any significant aspect of your life, the holidays can magnify the sense of emptiness and sorrow. It's essential to recognize that it's okay to grieve, even during this season of merriment.

One of the first steps in coping with grief during the holidays is acknowledging your feelings. It's normal to feel sadness, anger, or even guilt when everyone around you is celebrating. Give yourself permission to feel these emotions without judgment. Sharing your feelings with a trusted friend or therapist can also provide much-needed support.

Creating new traditions can be a helpful way to cope with the absence of someone or something significant in your life. While it's important to honor and remember the past, incorporating new traditions or modifying old ones can help you find meaning and connection during the holidays. Lighting a candle in memory of your loved one or volunteering to help those less fortunate can provide a sense of purpose.

Self-care is crucial during this time. Grief can take a toll on both your physical and emotional well-being. Make time for self-compassion and relaxation. Engage in activities that bring you comfort and peace, whether it's reading, listening to music, or taking walks in nature. Reach out for support.

You don't have to go through this journey alone. Friends and family can be a source of comfort and understanding. Additionally, support groups and counseling services are available for those who may benefit from professional help. Navigating grief and loss during the holidays can be incredibly challenging, but it's essential to remember that your feelings are valid, and you are not alone. By acknowledging your emotions, creating new traditions, practicing self-care, and seeking support, you can find ways to cope with grief and eventually find moments of solace and even joy during this holiday season.

PROGRAMS OF SUPPORT

all Friends Together programs are open to the public and free of charge

Each diagnosis of cancer brings new trials. The patient and their loved ones are stepping into a world that seems to have its own language and rhythm. Lean on us as you travel this journey called cancer. We've walked a similar path and are here to help. You do not need to do this alone.



Group support in Alpena

Friends Crochet & Craft

Learn crafty ways to overcome 'chemobrain'. Meets in April, June, August, October, and December on Mondays at 3pm. For men and women.

Good Grief

Meets Tuesdays at 10am for those dealing with loss. Feel safe in our confidential, no pressure environment.

Deep Breath - yoga & sound bath

Connect with your breath and gently move your body. Designed for women cancer survivors. Meets Tuesdays at noon during January, March, May, July, Sept., & Nov.

Tuesday Topics

Join us on the second Tuesday of each month at 4:30pm for our monthly program. Available in person at Friends Together or via Zoom.

Guys Like Us

For men with cancer. Meets each Wednesday in person and via Zoom at 10:00am. Come have a coffee and cookie with guys who've been where you are.

Women on Wednesday

For women with cancer. Meets in-person and via Zoom on Wednesdays at 4:30pm. Come for a dash of hope, some laughter, and real-talk.

Be YOU tiful

For women with cancer who would like to look and feel their best. Join us for this evening of pampering. 5pm, October 25, please call to register.

Friends Breathe Together

Meets the first Thursday of the first full week of the month at 2pm. For men and women who want to improve breathing, speech, and swallowing following treatment.

Friends Eat Together

For all with cancer who find eating in public uncomfortable due to dysphagia. Meets the first Thursday of the first full week of the month at 4pm.

Group support off-site

Friends Together North

All meet on Mondays at the *Presque Isle Library in Rogers City* at 3:00pm.

Friends Together South

Men and women meet at 5:00pm on Tuesdays at *Knights of Columbus in East Tawas*.

Contact us for more information. (989) 356-3231 www.friendstogethermi.org

Oscoda County Sheriff Kevin Grace presented a \$10,700 check to Judy Burns and Melissa Burns of Friends Together. The funds were raised at the annual Badges for a Cause 5K Run/Walk and Auction which took place Aug. 12.

Community Engagement



new look - same Judy

As my transition continues, I will be the Community Engagement Coordinator.

The mission of Friends Together is to provide support and services to persons coping with cancer in our six county region. No one should experience cancer alone. As we have grown into a well-groomed and mature organization, there is a renewed effort to meet the needs of persons in outlying communities. Regardless age or financial status, travelling the cancer journey is plagued by anxiety, loneliness, and an overwhelming sense of helplessness. My hope is to alleviate the struggle by reintroducing the support available through Friends Together. One way to do this is to focus on outlying community engagement and help resolve the obstacles one faces.

Considerations as I begin:

Is there an unseen need or can we better address the needs already identified?

Who is most affected by lack of support and services?

What is the benefit to this community as a whole?

How invested is the community leadership to become partners in this effort?

How will new programs and services in this community be maintained?

The goal is to enhance the quality and quantity of life for those with a cancer experience.

Together we look forward to a renewed collaboration and empowerment in the outlying communities with leadership and the community as a whole.

Judy Burns, Founder, Community Engagement Coordinator



5 fundraisers show your support

OCTOBER 2023

BUY A RAFFLE TICKET

Back this year is our Muzzle Loader Raffle! Plus two other prizes you could win - a beautiful handmade quilt or \$250 cash.

NOVEMBER 2023

SPONSOR CAMPAIGN MAILING

Want to sponsor us and all we do? This is your chance to be involved at a new level. Email us today! shelly@friendstogethermi.org

NOVEMBER 2023

Dawn Marie Burns Promise Fund

This is an excellent opportunity to help someone going to school in a healthcare/ oncology field, this is for you.

DECEMBER 15, 2023

KETTLE NATION

Drive-thru our parking lot on Dec. 15 from 10-6 for a bag of yumminess. Buy for yourself and for holiday gifts.

JANUARY 12, 2024

Bowling Kick-off

Help us kick-off the new year with a few games of bowling. Pick your teams. Email shelly@friendstogethermi.org



SHELLY GIBBS

TRANSPORTATION & LODGING

Cancer appointment out-of-town

“ I don't have family to lean on. Getting help with transportation and lodging has taken a huge weight off my shoulders.

a grateful patient



Cancer patients and families who travel for treatment and testing can quickly become weary from repeated trips. Some of our friends travel four to ten hours to get where they need to go.

Not many can save the amount of money needed to cover an unexpected, life-changing diagnosis. Health insurance helps offset the cost of healthcare, but few cover the cost 100%, much less all the ancillary expenses.

Some reports state that anyone with a cancer diagnosis can easily become cash strapped and far from home.

The last thing they need to worry about is additional expenses, such as lodging.

Friends Together can help. A percentage of the donations we receive is directed to lodging assistance. This program is offered to express our community's support for our neighbors dealing with cancer.

If you are traveling out of town for cancer care, we can assist you by arranging for and subsidizing lodging during out-of-town treatment. All assistance is dependent on the availability of funding.

Greg Springs

Just one of our volunteer drivers

Volunteers are crucial to the success of Friends Together! If you are interested in becoming a volunteer driver please call Friends Together.

Friends Together is pleased to introduce you to Greg Springs, volunteer driver for Friends Together! When chatting with Greg about why he chose to give his time to Friends Together, he stated, “being retired has given me the luxury of having some spare time on my hands and has allowed me to “donate” some of that time back to the local community! I chose to volunteer for Friends Together as I knew of the wonderful things they do for Northeast Michigan’s cancer patients, survivors, and their families. I have met some wonderful people while driving them to their appointments, and their appreciation and the many “thank you statements” is very gratifying.”

We would like to say Thank You to Greg and all our amazing volunteers and drivers! They are all a great asset to Friends Together and the people we serve.

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



wish list

other ways to help

Small non-profits spend, on average, \$3,000/year on office supplies.

“

What matters is taking care of each other.

anonymous

”

Over the years, the need for cancer support services has increased. Our ability to now have a part-time employee going into all the communities we serve on a semi-regular basis will only increase the demand for services. Because of these two factors, we have taken a closer look at how we spend our money. Friends Together has always strived to use the gifts we receive responsibly. Now we want to do even better. To that end, we are developing a wish list. This list will be a live list of needs, gifts, operating supplies, and other items we use regularly to help our neighbors with cancer.

If you are looking for a way to help, this may be a way to do so.

The list will include items used in-house, during support group meetings, at fundraising events, or just about any business need.

Our thought is, the more expenses we can offset, the more of the funding we receive can go directly to the people and families we serve.

It is estimated that the average cancer patient sees a loss of over \$92,000 due to treatment-related costs. (The American Journal of Medicine). So next time there is a BOGO free on tissue, snacks, or just about anything on our list, consider buying one and giving the free one to us! We'll use the money we saved from not having to buy the product toward patient support.

Take a look at our list on the next page (page 10). Contact us with questions.

gas cards

the never-ending need

We know sometimes the cost of fuel is the only thing standing between getting treatment and having to refuse life-saving treatment. Our gas cards are more than just help to get to treatment, they are hope. Hope for healing. Hope for another day. Hope.

If you are able to give your neighbors hope, please help. The QR code will allow you to donate from wherever you are. Make a one time gift or a monthly donation. On behalf of our neighbors with cancer, thank you.



our friendly little wish list by helping us, you are helping others

look no farther - here are quick and simple ways to help out

Office Supplies

- All purpose white copy/printer paper, 8.5x11"
- Premium white cardstock, 8.5x11"
- 13 gallon unscented, white garbage bags

Daily Needs

- Toilet paper
- Facial tissues
- Paper towels
- Napkins
- Paper plates/bowls
- Plastic utensils

Special Treats

- Individually wrapped snacks
- Bottled water
- K-cups coffee
- Ground coffee - regular

Unique Items

- Crossword, word search, puzzle books
- Travel-sized lotion, hand sanitizer
- Chapstick, lip balm
- Thank you cards, blank note cards
- Forever stamps



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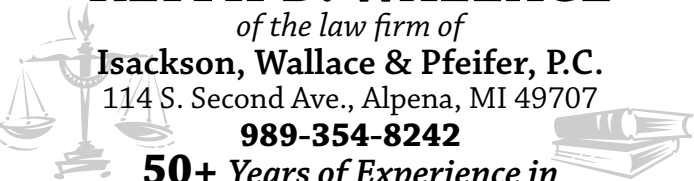
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gifts: in memory and in honor

We remember friends who have been honored or memorialized by their loved ones with this single list in each newsletter edition. Each has taught us something about living well through the cancer experience. Each leaves lasting, loving memories in our hearts. We promise to honor them by doing all we can to support and care for those in northeast Michigan touched by cancer. Please contact us if you have any questions about this listing.



The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you'll learn to live with it. You will heal, and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again, but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to.

~Elizabeth Kubler-Ross



Deb Lange
Jerry Weiss
Craig Mindykowski
Tom Murphy
Don Lewis
Shirley Mackenzie
Carla Skiba
Tim Buse
Kenneth Lee Clark
Mary Doyle
Larry Bishop

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Thank you Friends and Volunteers!

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We Help People with Cancer, and their loved ones too

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spotlight on services

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gas cards **transportation** lodging **wigs** comfort bags
patient planner hats **healincomfort shirts**
bras & forms and **more**

Have you been diagnosed with cancer? Do you know someone dealing with a cancer diagnosis?

Friends Together can help. Contact us:

(989) 356-3231

www.friendstogethermi.org

talktous@friendstogethermi.org