

July/August 2021

# THE Voice of Friends

We Help People With Cancer

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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.**



**Friends Together**  
[www.friendstogethermi.org](http://www.friendstogethermi.org)

## WHAT FRIENDS TOGETHER MEANS TO ME

As we continue through the 25th year of Friends Together, I thought it would be a great time to reflect on what this organization means to its members, this community, and on a personal level, myself. Everyone who is familiar with this wonderful organization has been touched by it in at least some capacity. Friends



Together is here to support those battling cancer as well as their loved ones. Through this service and support, friends have been made and lives have been changed, mine included.

Two years ago, I had just taken over a business, one originally started by our founder Judy Burns. I had known Judy since moving back to Alpena 5 years prior. She approached me offering the opportunity to join the Board of Directors for Friends Together. I knew very little about the organization, other than it was a cancer support group and that it was

(continued on page 3)

## 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)

# If For a Second...

*The following words are Judy's, but from 2014 & 2015. It seemed fitting to rerun these important words as we prepare to celebrate our 25th year of service to those with cancer in northeast Michigan.*

I recently viewed a video on YouTube - If For a Second. It was produced by the MIMI Foundation in France and highlighted the joy of persons coping with cancer as they - just for a second - forgot about their struggles and were lifted to a new sense of being carefree.

**If For a Second** - we can make a difference in the lives of our friends and families coping with cancer then all of our hard work and all of your support would be worth it.

**If For a Second** - someone could just lose themselves and be immersed in carefree joy - then prayers would be answered.

**If For a Second** - we could advance research to start turning the corner in prevention and cure - then we could shout for joy!

**If For a Second** - we lose sight of our mission that 'no one would experience cancer alone' - then we would lose the essence of the promise I made to my daughter.

**If For a Second** - you, a friend or family member hears the words, 'You have cancer' and you wonder, Who understands? Who can I talk to? Who can help me? - For that second and every minute thereafter, know that Friends Together is here for you!

*Those seconds really did matter and added up quickly these past 25 years. I would like to thank and congratulate everyone in our community who has taken the time - even a second - to give a hand to our neighbors and friends coping with cancer.*

*I am overwhelmed when I think back to the beginning of Friends Together and how I thought a monthly support group would fill the need. Little did I know that once we began, our programs and services would have such a huge ripple affect. Just take a look at our newsletter this month and you too will be amazed. For our dear friends with a cancer issue - please know that every second and every minute from the day of your diagnosis, Friends Together is here for you.*

*We can choose to use our seconds in a variety of ways, but again this year, we choose you.*

*Know you can count on us!*

Blessings,



**Thanks for giving your time to help us at our fundraiser, Jennifer. We all want folks with cancer to have the support they need.**

**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.*

(continued from page 1) TJ Hoes

founded about 20 feet away from where my desk currently sits. I did however know that I wanted to get involved in the community and Friends Together seemed like a great cause to be a part of. Judy's timing seemed impeccable, so I happily accepted the opportunity.

Until that point in my life, I had been one of the few lucky people who had never been affected by cancer. Sure, I knew of people who had their battles with this horrible disease, but it had never hit me on a personal level. Within the first 3 months of my time on the Board of Directors I would learn that my grandmother, Nancy Mills, and my father-in-law, whom many of you know, Dave Hillert, were both diagnosed with lung cancer. My world completely changed.

My view of Friends Together would quickly shift over the following months. A group of "really nice people" became a group of supporters, advocates, and family. This group and I suddenly had something in common, something that none of us ever wished we had to experience, but something that all of us were here to support each other in. I was able

to see just what this organization was established for and what it is capable of. Making the unbearable, bearable. Providing friendship and love in times of loneliness and sadness. Being there for each other. My grandmother passed away in January of this year and Dave passed away in May. Life will never be the same without them, but I know one of the best ways to honor them will be to continue working alongside those at Friends Together, to help those currently battling cancer, their supporters, and survivors. Passing on their love to others, that is what Friends Together means to me.



**Shelly and Charity waving the passing cars into Friends Together for our recent drive-thru fundraiser.**

## Cancer there is always hope

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 is here to help. As we all continue moving forward, learning the new normal of the world, know that you can contact us. You are not alone.



# Damn you, Steve

I'm not a fan of conflict. I'm not a push-over, but disharmony makes me incredibly uncomfortable. What can I say? I like it when everyone gets along. Yet down deep, I completely understand that all harmony all the time is an unreasonable expectation. But it is what I strive for in my life.

Ever since I was a child I wordlessly accepted the role of mediator. I didn't understand what I was doing or why I would position myself in the middle of situations that did not involve me. It mattered not that I was a child standing between adults. I can readily remember asking each of the grown-ups what happened right before this moment, from their view. I was inviting them, in true five year old form, to trace this immediate moment of discord back a step at a time to uncover the reason for the pending volatility. No one asked me to and I'm sure most were annoyed by my behavior.

I couldn't seem to help it. I liked to be happy. I wanted others to be happy. It felt better than all the other emotions. I needed my environment to be calm, trouble-free. I didn't know it wasn't entirely reasonable for the average person to be in a joyful state every moment of one's life. Our limbic system is a complex network of interconnected structures and pathways running deep within the brain. It is just one of many invisible wonders of the human body.

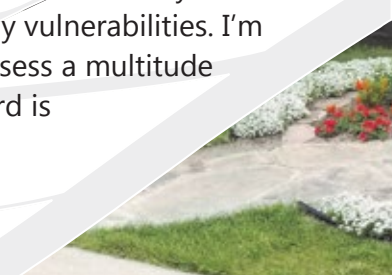
Emotions, it turns out, are crazy little beings with a lifestyle and set of behaviors that are as unique as they are confusing. Often an individual's reaction to any given situation is tough to reconcile. For example, some of us laugh when someone suddenly trips. It isn't funny. Yet giggles can still be heard. It is such a common reaction by individuals that science has given much time to the study of this phenomenon. From insensitivity to Schadenfreude to Pseudobulbar affect (PBA), there are as many named conditions surrounding this behavior as there are reasons people burst out in seemingly inappropriate ways.

Though the simpler explanation might be to classify the chuckling to nerves. Or perhaps we laugh because we have little to no frame of reference on how to handle a situation. It is undeveloped; a mental distance caused by not having worked specific areas of the brain. Whatever the reason, the displayed behavior contradicts the base emotion. This can lead to confusion on both party's behalf.

As we grow and develop our emotional intelligence should also expand. But conflict is something many people tend to lean away from. It is uncomfortable. Strife is not a cozy place to exist. Other parts of our brain seem to lend a hand to help us escape.

Brené Brown, a research professor in the area of sociology, has a great series of short cartoons. One of my favorites covers the topic of blame. The opening scene has Brené pouring her mourning cup of coffee. Something occurs and she spills it on herself. No one else is in the house. Her very first reaction is, "Damn You, Steve." Even though her husband Steve is already at work and is not directly connected to this event, she blames him. If you have access to a computer, search on 'Brené Brown blame short' and the YouTube video should pop right up. Watch it. It is less than four minutes. But these few minutes will stick with you and likely reduce the amount of conflict in your life. Each time I get stronger by accepting my vulnerabilities. I'm more open with myself and those I trust about how I feel and what it means. We all possess a multitude of emotions. Few of us find comfort in the unguarded moments. Yet, it is when our guard is down that the real growth happens.

~ *Lesslee Dort*, Program Manager & Patient Advocate



# We Are Celebrating 25 Years

## anniversary celebration

Can you believe it has been 25 years since Friends Together officially opened its doors? It has been! And we are so incredibly thankful for all of you.

As you know, our beginning stemmed from a powerful promise from mother to daughter. That moment in time has become a mission and a passion for us all. Each of us involved with Friends Together rejoices in helping to make the cancer journey a little less scary, a little less alone, a little more filled with joy, a little more filled with gratitude and hope. So now, 25 years later, we are an organization with 4 staff members, a fully committed board of directors, and hundreds of loyal and generous donors and sponsors.

We invite those touched by cancer and the community-at-large to stop by our offices on Thursday, August 12, 2021, at 5:30pm, to help us celebrate the past 25 years and welcome with open arms the next 25 years.

We will dedicate our new Inspiration Garden of Hope, release butterflies in honor of those who have experienced cancer, and celebrate the beauty of being there for one another. Please call us at (989) 356-3231 to reserve your spot at our 25th Anniversary Celebration. Small plates and beverages will be served.

## butterfly release

According to the University of Michigan, the butterfly has become a metaphor for transformation and hope; across cultures, it has become a symbol for rebirth and resurrection, for the triumph of the spirit and the soul over the physical prison, the material world.

What better symbol to help us honor those who have journeyed through cancer? Please join us on Thursday, August 12, 2021, for our first butterfly release.

We are accepting names of loved ones to highlight during our release, please contact us for details. Donations appreciated.

**Join us on  
August 12 as we  
celebrate 25 years,  
dedicate our new garden and  
release some butterflies.**



## Garden of Hope

A place of hope and inspiration, our new memorial garden will be open to all. The official dedication will take place on Thursday, August 12, 2021.

Located in the front of our building, the garden was designed to allow all to enjoy the serenity that comes with the delicate flowers while enjoying the view of Lake Huron.



**Inspiration  
Garden of Hope**

# Volunteer Drivers Save Lives

Friends Together currently offers two vans that are in full use as we are actively transporting patients from 6 counties including: Alpena, Alcona, Presque Isle, Montmorency, Oscoda and Iosco. **Cancer doesn't stop, so neither can we.**

In May 2021, Friends Together drove over 4,000 miles getting patients to and from their cancer related medical appointments. Our services are free of charge. It is crucial that requests are made with as much notice as possible as rides are coordinated in the order that we receive the request. Friends Together can provide gas cards for those that have their own means of transportation.

## Support is just a call away

As the need increases for Friends Together to transport, so does the need for more volunteer drivers. We are happy to announce that we have recently added 3 new drivers to our list and would like to welcome Randy Zeeman, Sherry Tolan and Julie Murray, as they help us with our mission that no one person should face cancer alone.

Recently, one of our driver's shared her story with me. Her brother had been treated for cancer over many years. As the brother's primary caretaker, she traveled back and forth to appointments near and far. They reached out to Friends Together for some help and took advantage of many of our services including gas cards, overnight lodging and support. Upon the passing of her brother, she wanted to find a way to 'give back' and knew that volunteering for Friends Together was the perfect opportunity. On the one-year anniversary of her brother's passing, she signed up and became a volunteer driver for Friends Together!

Every volunteer that helps Friends Together has their own special story. Many of our event volunteers are cancer survivors, patients currently in treatment, family members, neighbors, friends and co-workers who have been affected by a cancer diagnosis. Volunteering is rewarding and is a great way to help others in need.

If you are interested in being a volunteer or a volunteer driver, please call 989-356-3231!



## Covid-19 Van Precautions

- **Van will be sanitized with each use.**
- **Drivers & passengers will wear protective masks.**
- **If passenger displays symptoms of illness, the scheduled transport will be cancelled or rescheduled.**
- **If driver displays symptoms of illness, a replacement driver will be sought.**

**Dueling Pianos is the featured act at this year's Comedy Night July 17 @ the Brown Trout Big Tent**

## Comedy Night!

Join Friends Together & our sponsor AAACU at this year's Michigan Brown Trout Festival! That's right! Our annual Comedy Night featuring Dueling Pianos will be held under the Big Tent at Brown Trout on Saturday, July 17, 2021! Doors open at 6:30pm, show begins at 7:30pm.

A night of fun, laughter, music, and games you will not want to miss. Pick up your tickets at Friends Together (hint: we sell out most years). Must be 21 to enter. Tickets are \$25 per adult.

Big Raffle - Pull Tabs - 50/50 - Kettle Nation - Pizza - Cash Bar

## Pig Roast!

Mark your calendar for this year's Friends Together & PIEG Pig Roast! A sure to please plate full of BBQ Pork, Baked Potatoes, Cole Slaw, Baked Beans, Bread, with Beverages and Dessert!

That's a lot of food for only \$15 per adult and \$7 per child under 12 years.



## Events coming up

### July

17th - Dueling Pianos

25th - Pig Roast

### August

12th - 25th Anniversary Celebration  
with Butterfly Release &  
Inspiration Garden of Hope dedication  
22nd - Family Day @ Dinosaur Gardens

### September

18th - Connie's Fall Festival



**Pig Roast**  
**July 25th @**  
**The Depot on Fletcher Street**

We will again host this event as a drive-thru! No matter the weather, you can pull up and be served a scrumptious meal to take home, share with a friend, or deliver to a loved one. Call up some friends and have a picnic - we'll prepare the food! All to support those with cancer in our area. Sunday at The Depot on Fletcher Street from 1:00-5:00pm. Tickets available in advance at Friends Together.

# Weekly Support Groups

Support Groups currently meet at Thunder Bowl Lanes, The Other Room (unless otherwise noted in description).

**Friends Together North** If you live in or near Rogers City and have been touched by cancer, or know someone who has, please join Friends Together North! Meets at Presque Isle Library on the first and third Mondays at 6pm. For more information call 989-464-4164 or 989-356-3231.

**Mindful Movement** Join Friends Together at Bella Rose Yoga Studio on Tuesdays at noon for Mindful Movement for Healing, a gentle, unique yoga program designed to nourish, inspire and empower each woman healing and dealing with cancer. **Next series begins Tuesday, August 3, 2021.**

**Caregivers Connect** Come to Caregivers Connect to meet others who share the caregiver experience. Identify your role as caregiver. Recognize your needs. Suspended until further notice.

**Friends Together Live!** Meet others who are coping with a variety of cancer issues. Share resources and information, discuss family issues and coping strategies, and make new friends who understand. Our evening is filled with comfort and fellowship. Tuesdays, 6pm.

**Good Grief** Each Tuesday this 10am grief group will help us navigate grief in the best way possible.

**Guys Like Us** Wednesday Morning coffee crew of men who are coping with cancer. Join in the discussion or just listen. 10am every Wednesday.

**Women on Wednesdays** All cancers, all women, all ages. Join us on Wednesdays at 6pm for support, sharing, information & encouragement—all in a confidential, welcoming environment. Women only.

**A Touch of Beauty** Join other women at Friends Together for A Touch of Beauty, a free program designed for women during and after the cancer experience. Facilitated by a licensed esthetician, utilizing all-natural products & demonstrations. Next class is **TBD**.

**Living with Loss** Recovering after the loss of a loved one? You are not alone. Join us as we work through living with the loss of a loved one. Held at 6pm on Thursdays.

Friends Together programs are offered in partnership with:



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## 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.**

## support groups

Friends Together offers nine (9) different support group opportunities for those experiencing a cancer diagnosis. Whether you are the patient or the caregiver, we are here to support you along the journey.

### **Join a group when you are ready.**

It can be right at diagnosis or before treatment begins. Some come to group during treatment or even when treatment is done. Whatever works for you - we are here. Call (989) 356-3231 or email [talktous@friendstogether.org](mailto:talktous@friendstogether.org) for more information.

## thank you!

It's a beautiful, sunny day for a ride and Friends Together was delighted with a visit from our friends representing Agent Orange. This amazing organization is always helping others. Today they rolled on in with a warm hello and a generous donation that helps us do what we do....help people who have been affected by a cancer diagnosis. We would like to express our gratitude and thanks for your continued support!



**Agent Orange representatives present check to Friends Together.**

## Need to Talk?

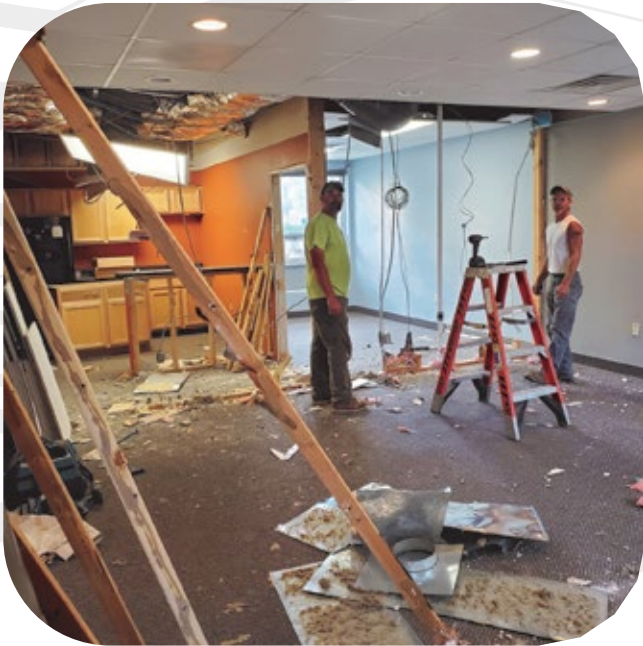
Friends Together is staffed with compassionate individuals who have personal experience with cancer. We understand what you are feeling and experiencing. While your journey is unique to you, we have walked a similar path and know how to navigate the terrain.

Please contact us or just stop in to talk. We are here during the week from 8:30am to 3:00pm. 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.

**You Are Not Alone**



# back together @ Friends Together



Thanks to the generosity of our building owner, Dr. Pilichowski, the First Federal Foundation, the Besser Foundation, and the general public's donations, Friends Together is busily remodeling our interior to make more space for our support group meetings.

Gone is Lesslee's office! Gone is a separate kitchen area! Gone is our old group support room!

Introducing the making of our expanded, spacious, new group support area! With more than 650 square feet we will be able to host all of our current support groups back at Friends Together!

A GREAT BIG thank you to the Thunder Bowl Lanes! Their big-heartedness made it possible for us to keep meeting during the pandemic.

<p>Memory Care</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>BESSER</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY</p> <p>Assisted Living</p> <p>Making a positive difference in the lives of our residents!</p> <p>325 Johnson St. Alpena • 989-884-9787 • besserseniorliving.com</p>	<p><b>Alpena Alcona Area Credit Union</b></p> <p>ALPENA 989-356-3577          ATLANTA 989-785-3800          LINCOLN 989-736-8912          OSCODA 989-739-9103          OSSINEKE 989-471-2332          TAWAS CITY 989-362-7980</p> <p>www.aaacu.com</p> <p>New Members Always Welcome!</p>
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# In Memory and In Honor

We remember those who have touched our lives.

Often, family and friends make a donation to Friends Together in the name of someone they love.

Please contact us if you have any questions about this listing or would like someone to appear on a future list.

## In Memory

Prudy Arthur  
Gordon Burns  
Vicki Cherrette  
Laura Ann Coleman  
Phyllis Corwin  
Larry Dornoff  
Patti Duncan  
Dave Hillert  
Anna Hincka  
Martha Jurkovich  
Wilma Kirschner  
Donna LaBonte  
Cindy LeDuc

Grace Anne Lobel  
Sue Maxwell  
Tom Render  
Barb Skaluba  
Theresa Szczerowski  
Tami Rae Townsend  
Robert Van Dette  
Joey Wojda

## In Honor

Ken Ilsley  
Michael & Julie Trainor



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Enjoy a **FREE** small Cup of Coffee  
Friends Together is Celebrating 25 Years!

Thank you Friends and Volunteers!



expires 12/31/21



# Friends Together

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## COMING EVENTS

**DUELING PIANOS** JULY 17

**PIG ROAST** JULY 25

**25TH ANNIVERSARY** AUGUST 12

**FAMILY DAY** AUGUST 22

**CONNIE'S FALL FESTIVAL** SEPTEMBER 18

YOU'RE  
*invited* TO

**Friends Together's  
25th Anniversary Celebration!**

Join us on **Thursday, August 12, 2021**, at 5:30pm!  
After a few opening words, we will have a short dedication of our new  
**Inspiration Garden of Hope.**

Following the dedication we will hold a **butterfly release**  
in honor of all who have traveled the cancer journey.

**Tour our newly remodeled building** and take a stroll through the  
history of Friends Together. Enjoy a selection of small plates and beverages  
while listening to **live music from Ronnie Fryer** -  
including original songs written especially for Friends Together.

**Friends Together**® 105 Prentiss Street Alpena, MI 49707 **Please RSVP to (989) 356-3231**