

March/April 2021

THE Voice of Friends

We Help People With Cancer

This *issue*

p.2 A matter of balance

p.4 Don't look up, look forward

p.6 We help break the transportation barrier

p.8 Support Groups

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

The year 2021 marks the 25th year of operation for Friends Together. Our founder, Judy Burns, started this organization after the loss of her daughter to cancer. It took great courage and passion to bring this family of friends through years of tears and laughter. Most of us have a story to tell that brings us together. My story started well before the beginning of Friends Together.



Gary Stevens

The year was 1982 and my wife, Donna and I would soon celebrate our 13th anniversary. We were married soon after high school and had 2 children. In the fall of that year Donna started experiencing pain in her ear along with headaches. A visit to our family doctor resulted in a diagnosed ear infection and a prescription was written. A few weeks later the pain persisted so back to the doctor with the same results and a stronger prescription. Now we were over a month with no relief so our doctor made an appointment with a local Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist. After examining Donna the doctor asked her to wait in the office while he spoke with me. I was told that he would make an appointment with a neurosurgeon in Petoskey and that I should keep her home for Christmas. The appointment was made for the 26th of December. As you can imagine, we were very concerned. By Christmas Donna was very ill. She had difficulty walking and one eye would not focus. By the time we arrived for the appointment I had to

(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.



Friends Together[®]
www.friendstogethermi.org

FOR DETAILS CONTACT talktous@friendstogethermi.org

A Matter of Balance

Recently I completed a month of physical therapy—a regimen of stretching and exercise to ease the discomfort of pain caused by arthritis. I found some of the routine challenging, especially the 'balance exercise.'

I know the importance of a balanced life, but the challenge of marching in a straight line while holding a pole over my head was intimidating and I would imagine quite comical from the viewpoint of the therapist. I obeyed her direction, "Lift your knees. Right Foot. Left Foot. Hold the pole with both hands above your head—now march!" Repeat. Repeat.

I quickly realized that my physical balance had waned over the years. As I began the 'march to balance' I hurried my pace, only to discover that I was awkward and failed to stay within the white



lines on the floor. "Lift your knees. Right Foot. Left Foot. Hold the Pole. Now take your time." Taking my time and concentrating on my motion, I discovered with real effort on my part that I could regain a new sense of balance. I found my movement to be in harmony with my mind and body. I celebrated this seemingly small accomplishment.

What did I learn? I learned the importance of balance, order, rhythm and harmony. In our search for happiness and joy we achieve those goals when there is harmony and balance in our lives.

In the month of March, let's make every effort to steady ourselves and slow down. Take one step at a time. Don't rush. Be mindful of how you march through the day. As Albert Einstein said, "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." Right foot. Left foot. Right foot. Left foot. Keep moving in harmony.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judy".

Have a little extra?

Stimulus Checks. Required Minimum Distributions. Tax Refunds. These are all ways area residents have acquired extra funds this year.

For example, those age 72+ must start taking required minimum distributions (RMDs) from their individual retirement account every year. In what is

called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD), you can elect to donate all or a portion of your RMDs, up to \$100,000 a year, directly to charity.

Thank you to all who have received 'extra' money these past few months and chose to donate those funds to the Friends Together's Endowment Fund at the Community Foundation of Northeast Michigan. Because of you our future is more secure.

**Free support
is a call away**

(989) 356-3231

(989) 354-0813 (fax)

talktous@friendstogethermi.org

Thank you Alpena Buick GMC Family & Kyra for donating the funds raised from your jeans day! Pictured is Kyra presenting check to Lesslee.



(continued from page 1) Gary Stevens

carry her in. This sent the office staff into a panic and the doctor saw her immediately. A quick checkup resulted in an ambulance ride to the hospital. After several days of testing Donna was diagnosed with a brain tumor. A few more days of tests showed the tumor was cancerous and that the cancer had spread to all of her major organs. I needed to tell my wife that she was dying and that nothing could be done. She passed away mid-January 1983, just 2 weeks after she was diagnosed.

Many advancements have been made in cancer research and treatment since then. Patients are living longer and many are making full recoveries. I was one of those. After being diagnosed with stage 3 bladder cancer by Dr. Boehm I was scheduled for surgery at our local hospital. Dr. Boehm removed the cancer and we made a plan for follow up treatment. I am now 9 years cancer free.

A cancer diagnosis brings with it a sense of fear and isolation. We are fortunate to have great doctors and a wonderful treatment center right here in Alpena. Along with that we have the caring staff, fellow cancer fighters, and volunteers at Friends Together.

Happy anniversary Friends Together and thanks for your great support!



Gas Card Challenge Share the Love

Pictured below: City of Alpena staff members Jennifer , Bill & Kathy (not pictured) presented a generous donation in the amount of \$810 to Friends Together's Judy and Shelly. City of Alpena is a proud SUPPORT-level sponsor for Friends Together's annual fundraising campaign and are donating to Friends Together's Share The Love gas card challenge. City of Alpena staff is asking for area businesses and families to join in the gas card challenge by donating gas cards or monetary donation to Friends Together.



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.

Don't look up, look forward

There's an ancient moral parable about a tyrannical Roman king named Dionysius, his court flatterer, Damocles, and a sword. The king lived in luxury, yet in constant fear of retaliation, assassination. Damocles would incessantly comment on how wonderful it must be to be king, without a worry in the world. One day Dionysius showed Damocles what being king felt like. He seated Damocles at a lush banquet full of glorious foods, gifts, and servants to meet his every need. Damocles was reveling in the lap of luxury until he noticed the sword suspended above his head by a single horsehair. In that instant, Damocles could no longer enjoy the feast before him for fear of impending death. He asked to be excused and no longer wished to be so fortunate. Today, Damocles' Syndrome is recognized in medical publications and lived out by many cancer survivors.

To every single survivor out there - way to go! You did it! You fought and survived! You are here another day to love and be loved. To feel the sun on your face. To hear laughter. To smell fresh baked bread. Give yourself a hug and rejoice.

Survivorship begins at diagnosis. What only survivors know, is that nipping at the heels of survivorship is insecurity. Because we are now acutely aware of how close death might be. Like Dionysius' sword, cancer feels always looming. Mortality is something we have had to consider. It is no longer abstract. Yet, if we allow life's joys to be measured against our fear of death, we will lose the peace available to us each day.

The focus from diagnosis forward is on getting better, kicking cancer to the curb. There is no time to think past the next treatments. It can all happen so fast. During active cancer treatment, patients have access to an entire support team. From their doctors and healthcare staff to the individuals that step up to cheer them on during treatment. Appointment after appointment, someone is nearby ready to lend support.

For many, the day they all have been fighting for emerges, they are released from treatment! The cancer is undetectable. It is a momentous time. Euphoria, cake and streamers, a deserved party atmosphere celebrating a hard won battle. Out the door into the big wide world they go, floating on the high of the emotions.

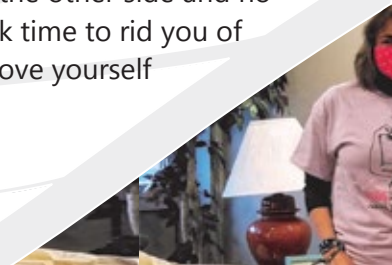
Time to get back to life as it was. Pick up where we left off. No more endless medical appointments. That first night is the best sleep they've had in a long time.

Then morning comes and reality sets in. No one is looking after them anymore and the anxiety and worry can become constant companions. Survivors can be unprepared for what comes next - a screeching halt to what was a whirlwind of activity, albeit often body-crushing. Throughout treatment patients know where they stand. From tumor markers to scans, they could rationalize why they felt like they did. If they got down, someone was there to prop them up. But now they are 'back to normal' and feeling lost and confused. They live with the fear of recurrence, nagging and persistent side effects that interrupt daily life, and a body, mind, and bank account that are much different than when they started. Life is fragile.

By 2030 it has been estimated there will be over 22 million cancer survivors. And if we look at survivorship in the broader sense of the human experience, that number pales in comparison to the number of survivors of all disorders and diseases. Survivorship programs are important for those moving forward from their illness.

Cancer is insidious. You are resilient. During the journey, we are laser focused on getting rid of our disease. When faced with life and death decisions, we pick life. Treatment, while incredibly tailored to specific needs, can feel like a wrecking ball swinging through the body. Remember, your body brought you through to the other side and no battle is fought without some scarring. It's new shape and abilities are to be honored. It took time to rid you of disease. Grant yourself time to build back up. And as you continue to heal from treatment, love yourself enough to accept and even embrace the beautiful, new you.

~ *Lesslee Dort*, Program Manager & Patient Advocate



Look for these new resources

website update

Ready, Set, Go! We are ready to introduce Phase II of our Friends Together Website makeover! All this month we will be working to enhance our website by adding new tabs.

Under the Resource tab will be the following information:

- Copies of past newsletters in digital format
- Links to trusted cancer support websites
- 'New to Cancer' welcome area with disease-specific patient-centered information
- Information on how to be your own patient advocate or be one for someone you love
- On-demand webinars to watch at will
- Videos - both informational and entertaining
- How to acquire your very own copy of a powerful tool - the C101 Patient Planner (co-branded by Friends Together)

Under the Get Involved tab we will add the following information:

- More detailed event information with graphics
- A listing of businesses who sponsor us at the higher levels with links so you can visit their page, too

technology = togetherness

Thanks to the **United Way's Emergency Response Fund**, Friends Together will be able to offer support to even more people with cancer. Beginning in April 2021, we will be able to simultaneously hold in-person meetings while linking in to a Zoom room. That means you can join us for a support group from the comfort of your home. We will begin this new service offering in our Tuesday Night Live, Guys Like Us, and Women on Wednesday support groups to start. More will be added in the future.

To further expand our support of you while on your cancer journey, Friends Together has purchased a Chromebook laptop.



Now you can come into our office and browse the latest information on your best healthcare choices. Interested in a tele-med oncology appointment, but don't have access to technology. Now you do! Would you like to use the patient portal for your cancer healthcare center but don't have a computer? Come on in! We are here to help cancer patients in northeast Michigan.



Thank You Zonta of Alpena! Because of you and those who support the Zonta Breast Cancer Walk for Women, Friends Together continues to provide support specific to a woman's needs. Pictured is Eileen Douglass Budnick and Lesslee Dort.

We help break the transportation barrier

Your support and generosity give us strength and hope. Please help us in 2021. With your help we will do it again. We must. **Cancer doesn't stop, so neither can we.**



Friends Together's transportation program helps break the barrier for patients getting to and from their cancer related medical appointments.

Here is what you need to know about what Friends Together has to offer:

- Over 20 volunteer drivers that have been approved to transport patients.
- Two vans that are licensed, insured and maintained to the fullest by Downtown Union 76 -a proud sponsor of Friends Together.
- Many drivers will transport with their personal vehicles.
- We offer gas cards to patients and their caregivers to help offset the expense of daily travel.

Support is just a call away

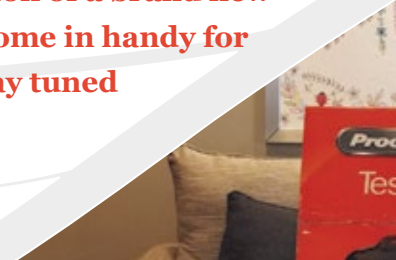
- There is no application.
- No financial proof required for assistance.
- We can redirect you to other services that may be available to you.
- Since January 2021 Friends Together volunteer drivers have traveled 8,390 miles assisting 22 patients to their critical medical appointments.
- We believe in our Mission – no one should face their cancer journey alone and we are here to help those affected by a cancer diagnosis.

If you or anyone you know could benefit from our services, please call 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.**

Thank you Paulette Woloszyk for thinking of us with this awesome donation of a brand new roasting oven. This will come in handy for our annual pig roast....stay tuned folks...it's in July 2021!



rally at the alley

Do you have some extra furniture?
Maybe some dishes you never use?
Donate it to the first Friends Together
Garage Sale happening this spring!

Are you looking for some great buys on
nearly new and lightly used items?
Come to the Friends Together Garage
Sale this May at the Thunder Bowl
Lanes on **May 15 & 16, 2021.**

pop-up boutique

Our Women on Wednesday support
group is having another Pop-up
Boutique! **We are collecting purses,
scarves, and jewelry in like-new
condition** to sell this spring. Donate to
our sale and come shop to replenish
your accessories. Everyone deserves a
fresh look this spring! Sale is this May
at the Thunder Bowl Lanes on
May 15, 2021.



online auction

Can you believe we are a little more than a month
away from our spring auction? We will again be
using the free online charity auction software,
BiddingOwl.

April 22-29, 2021

Keep a look-out for this recognizable owl logo for
your chance to bid on some amazing items! All
proceeds will go toward helping people in our
communities with cancer.

What a great reason to shop!



IT'S A GAS CARD CHALLENGE!

**Alpena Agency staff recently presented
\$600 in gas cards to Friends Together in
participation of our "Fill the Love" gas card
challenge. Area businesses are challenging other
businesses to rally together to support friends,
family and loved ones who are affected by a
cancer diagnosis. Pictured: Alpena Agency Staff
and Judy Burns & Shelly Gibbs of Friends
Together.**

**Friends Together services Alpena, Alcona, Iosco,
Montmorency, Oscoda and Presque Isle Counties.**

Weekly Support Groups

Please note:

Barring any unforeseen circumstances Support Groups will begin meeting in person the week of April 12, 2021. We will hold our groups at The Other End, part of the Thunder Bowl Lanes. Call with any questions. (989)356-3231

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! Temporarily suspended during restrictions on social gatherings. For more information call 989-464-4164 or 989-356-3231

Mindful Movement Join Friends Together 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 April 6 - May 4** at Bella Rose Yoga & Fitness Studio

Thank you Anne Marie Smith for presenting mBank's generous donation to Friends Together.



Caregivers Connect Come to Caregivers Connect to meet others who share the caregiver experience. Identify your role as caregiver. Recognize your needs. Tuesdays, 6:00 pm. Call (989) 356-3231 for more information.

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 6:00 pm via Zoom. Call (989) 356-3231 for more information.

Guys Like Us Wednesday Morning coffee crew of men who are coping with cancer. Join in the discussion or just listen. 10am every Wednesday via Zoom. Call (989) 356-3231 for more information.

Women on Wednesdays All cancers, all women, all ages. Join us for support, sharing, information & encouragement—all in a confidential, welcoming environment. Women only. Currently meeting via Zoom at 6pm on Wednesday. Call (989) 356-3231 for more information.

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**. Reservations required

Living with Loss Recovering after the loss of a loved one? You are not alone. Group starts up in **May 2021**. For more information call 989-464-4164 or 989-356-3231

Friends Together programs are offered in partnership with:



MidMichigan Health
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN HEALTH SYSTEM



ZONTA
CLUB OF
ALPENA
MEMBER OF ZONTA INTERNATIONAL
EMPOWERING WOMEN
THROUGH SERVICE & ADVOCACY

All

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

In accordance with federal law and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice & TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

nutrition

“We are what we eat” is a saying that has been around since 1826! In popular culture we have been markedly focus on our diet since as far back as 1942. Today we receive many food messages. Is there one right way when you have cancer? Are there definite no-nos? Friends Together is working with area experts to develop a stand-alone webinar on nutrition to be freely available to all who wish to view. Watch our website for its introduction.

survivorship

Survivorship begins at diagnosis. But what happens after the treatment phase? Our lives are full of appointments as we actively fight cancer. It is the time after treatment when our minds are freed up to think about all that took place and what it means. Join a support group and be with others who can listen and help.

Need to Talk?

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.

Please contact us or just stop in to talk. We are here during the week from 9am to 3pm. 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.



**Thank you
Damian and Steve
for TWIZZLING for
Friends Together.
Great time had by all!**



Hunter's Harvest for Charity representative Mark Boyk presented a check for \$1000.00 to Judy & Shelly of Friends Together for the ongoing "Fill the Love" gas card challenge. Hunter's Harvest mission is fundraising to contribute to charitable organizations and needy individuals who are financially distressed due to circumstances beyond their control. Their generous donation to us will be used to purchase gas cards that will help offset the financial barrier for patients to get to and from their medically necessary cancer treatments and appointments.

Can we ask you a favor?

Friends Together is looking for your story.

Specifically, we would like to know how we helped you or a loved one. Did it make a difference? Would you recommend us? Please do us a favor and write down how we help you and send it to us.

Bashful or private? That is ok. You could send us your words and ask your name not to be shown. We can simply use your initials or label as anonymous.

Not a writer? Why not take a video with your cellphone? Pretend you are sharing your story with a friend. Or record how Friends Together supported

you, or a loved one. There are so many ways to deliver your message.

Did you know most people who would like support are to shy or scared to come in? Or they think a support group is an hour of crying and sadness. They are missing some joy and unconditional support.

Can you imagine what your journey would have been like if you didn't walk through our door or call us?

Please email your contribution to Lesslee at lesslee@friendstogethermi.org or mail to her at Friends Together 105 Prentiss St. Alpena, MI 49707.

This one, simple, low to no cost favor takes so little time on your part but helps us help others in a big way!

<p>Memory Care</p>  <p>Assisted Living</p> <p>BESSER</p> <p>SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY </p> <p>Making a positive difference in the lives of our residents!</p> <p>325 Johnson St. Alpena • 989-884-9787 • besserseniorking.com</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>
 <p>Judy McFalda, Attorney-at-Law 540 N. Bradley Highway Rogers City, MI 49779 989-734-4486</p> <p>Wills, Trusts, Probate, Real Estate Guardianship, Business Law Free Consultation</p>	<p><i>the drug store</i>  HealthMart PHARMACY</p> <p>CBD Oils</p> <p>The modern drug store where you are greeted with a friendly "Hello" and "How can we help you?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting All Major Health Plans • Free Delivery Service • Drive Through Window <p>...where Pharmacist Keith Misiak and Jim Straley will be glad to serve you!</p> <p>2236 US-23 S • ALPENA • (989) 354-2171</p>
<p>Proudly Serving the Greater Alpena and Hillman Communities</p>  <p>222 S. Second Avenue Alpena, Michigan 49707 (989) 354-8411 131 E. First Street Hillman, Michigan 49746 (989) 742-3993</p> <p>www.bannanfuneralhome.com</p>	<p>KEITH D. WALLACE <i>of the law firm of</i> Isackson, Wallace & Pfeifer, P.C. 114 S. Second Ave., Alpena, MI 49707 989-354-8242</p> <p><i>Over 50 Years of Experience in</i> Trusts, Wills, Probate and Medicaid Matters</p>
<p>FOR YOUR FAMILY'S TOUGHEST TIMES, CALL OURS ANYTIME.</p> <p>Let us help by calling (866) 323-5974.</p>  <p>DOING WHAT'S BEST.</p> 	 <p>Independent living for Seniors 62 years & over meeting HUD guidelines. Apply Today at 210 Wilson Street. Affordable Living - Alpena (989) 356-6725 jedmo@samaritas.org</p> 

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

Betty Smigelski
 Gladys Bennett
 Gilly Gibbons
 Betsy Gagnon
 Tami Townsend
 Mike Cramer
 Sally Ann Kosloski
 Ron Philburn
 David Halleck
 Robert Adams

McConnell Sisters
 Robert Wikaryasz
 Jean Anderson
 Gary Daoust
 Joan Thomen
 Joyce Murphy
 June McCoury
 Naomi Potter
 Rita Losinski
 Kurt Ries



LeFave PHARMACY & COMPOUNDING
 "Caring about YOU...Since 1976"

1202 W. Chisholm • Alpena
www.LefavePharmacy.com
(989) 354-3189

- **FREE** Medication Synchronization -get all your Rx's filled same day
- **FREE** Medication Strip Packaging -organized by date & time, clearly labeled, securley sealed
- **FREE DELIVERY** to Alpena and surrounding areas!
- **DRIVE THRU or CURBSIDE**
- **NOW OFFERING** Compounded Medications & Bio-Identical HRT

TARKINGTON FAMILY DENTISTRY

Andrew C. Tarkington D.D.S. | Alex A. Tarkington D.M.D.

• **NEW PATIENTS WELCOME** •
 215 S. Ripley Blvd., Alpena, MI (989) 354-8340

Guys Like Us



Be a part of this informal group of men providing encouragement and support every week. Please join us on Zoom. **Wednesdays at 10:00am**
 A Cancer Support Group For Men

For more information call (989) 356-3231

SKIBA VISION CENTER, PLLC.

VISION SOURCE Gerald A. Skiba II, O.D.
 Tyler Skiba, O.D.

2368 U.S. 23 South • Alpena, MI 49707 • Alpena Mall
 (989) 356-9096 • Fax (989) 356-3968
 Emergency (989) 255-4404 • (989) 255-4828
www.visionsource-skibavision.com

HARD COVER • SOFT COVER • E-BOOKS



MODEL PUBLICATIONS

WORLD-WIDE DISTRIBUTION!

WE MAKE BOOK PUBLISHING EASY!
www.modelprintingservice.com **989-356-0834**



ALLEGRA


MARKETING • PRINT • MAIL



• Vinyl Lettering • Illuminated Signs
 • Window Graphics • Channel Letters
 • Vehicle Wraps • LED & Mounted Signs
 • Banners & Decals • Event Displays

Get noticed with a new sign! Call us Today!
 829 W. CHISHOLM ST. ALPENA 989-356-0834
www.allegraalpena.com ed@allegraalpena.com

WOW Please join us for Women on Wednesdays **Wednesdays at 6:00pm** on Zoom. This weekly program of support and wellness is for women of all ages, all backgrounds, all cancers.



For more information call (989) 356-3231



Friends Together®

105 Prentiss Street
Alpena, MI 49707
(989) 356-3231

Non Profit
US Postage
PAID
Permit 157
Alpena, MI 49707

**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.**

COMING EVENTS

BIDDING OWL AUCTION APRIL 22-29

RALLY AT THE ALLEY GARAGE SALE MAY 15 & 16

POP-UP BOUTIQUE MAY 15

Friends Together®

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 9:00am-3:00pm

Phone Number: (989) 356-3231

Email Address: talktous@friendstogethermi.org



WE ARE CELEBRATING 25 YEARS



We Help People with Cancer (and their families, too)