

WHAT'S INSIDE:



... the mission of taking care of people with cancer will continue to be at the very heart of our every effort. **PAGE 2**



True joy comes when we share both the burdens and blessings with one another. **PAGE 4**



In February 2023, Friends Together's volunteer drivers drove 5,585 miles getting patients to and from their critical cancer care appointments. **PAGE 8**

we help people with cancer, and their loved ones too

# THE voice OF Friends

MELISSA BURNS

ISSUE NO. 2  
SPRING  
2023

## friends together continues: judy burns steps aside, daughter melissa continues the promise

The Friends Together legacy continues

I am so excited to return to Friends Together as the new Executive Director! As we begin this journey together, I want to start by thanking Judy Burns (aka Mom). Her tireless and committed work began when our family first experienced cancer with my sister Dawn's diagnoses and passing in 1995, and again with the passing of my Dad in 2021. Every single person that walks through the door at Friends Together is looking for hope and help. While Judy is stepping down from the Executive Director position, she will be someone we all look to as I transition into my new role.

Over the past 16 years, I've had the pleasure of working with several non-profit groups, creating a network of allies that I bring with me to Friends Together. Each one of these groups are the "boots on the ground" in caring for our community. They have helped strengthen my knowledge in fundraising, event planning, program creation and facilitation, managing groups of people and so much more. Along with my degree in Family Life Education, these relationships and experiences have shaped me into the mission-focused professional I am now.



Dawn Burns 1969-1995

Moving forward, I will be devoted to getting to know my co-workers and will be reacquainted with our volunteers including the board of directors, which is the backbone of Friends Together. I am committed to learning about existing partnerships and forming new ones. Through innovative concepts and a new leadership style, I plan to extend the reach of Friends Together to underserved areas of northeast Michigan. After losing loved ones to cancer, my passion for our mission is both personal and professional as I return to the organization. You have probably heard Judy's story many times about her promise to her daughter, Dawn. Although we shared the same experience together, I have my own story. And just as our stories are different, so are the attributes we each bring to Friends Together. I am overwhelmed by all of the encouraging text messages, phone calls and emails I've received the past couple of weeks as I settle in. I want to thank you for your continued support as we move forward together to make a positive impact in this community that I am so proud to be a part of.

Warmest Wishes,  
Melissa Burns,  
Executive Director



**JUDY BURNS**

She lived to love and loved to live. Her legacy to me was to share joy, offer comfort, be the best friend, love those you love every day, and make a difference.

Now, the legacy continues for the next generation of Friends Together: daughter, to mother, to daughter. It's time for me to sustain this legacy by supporting the appointment of my daughter, Melissa, as our next executive director—and in doing so, for me to let go with grace and a grateful heart. Melissa comes back to Friends Together with a passion and the talent to manage and lead us on our next chapter. Her heart is truly centered on continuing the legacy, and she represents all that is good in the work we do. She holds the promise of an even better Friends Together, and I am confident that this promise will be kept!

My new role as Friends' Founder/Director Emeritus will afford the luxury of pursuing some dreams in my personal life and taking some needed me-time, while still being an ambassador for our mission wherever needed. Working together with Melissa, I hope to provide a link from the past to our exciting future of tomorrow. We have so much to look forward to, and as always, the mission of taking care of people with cancer will continue to be at the very heart of our every effort. As I write these words I recall the days, the nights, the hard work, and the hundreds of people I have had the opportunity to hold deep in my heart. Love never fails—and my love for you all will never end.

With a big smile and an eternally grateful heart,  
Judy Burns

## NEXT STEPS: the future of the promise

*It is with a full and loving heart that I go into the next chapter of Friends Together. Twenty-seven years ago this life-giving mission began in memory of my daughter, Dawn.*

## food for thought: importance of setting goals

The Friends Together board and staff recently met over a weekend to discuss the future needs of those in our community with cancer. Here are the four goals we identified for the next three years.

We know we offer helpful support to our friends and neighbors with cancer. We will continue to reach as many in need of support as our resources allow.

We have an outstanding staff. We will strive to keep administrative expenses low and utilize partnerships and existing community resources to augment what we can do.

Build on our practices and procedures by

adopting and strategically using technology to best support those with cancer and their loved ones.

Our fundraisers are well attended and received by the communities we serve and beyond. We are ever grateful to our donors and supporters. However, we need to expand how we raise funding to carry out our mission so as not to overburden our constituents.



## 5 benefits of deep breathing

[www.urbanbalance.com/benefits-deep-breathing/](http://www.urbanbalance.com/benefits-deep-breathing/)

**1 decreases stress/increases calm**  
by lowering your heart rate and allowing more oxygen to enter your blood stream; thus telling your brain to relax.

**2 relieves pain**  
by triggering the release of endorphins, which block the nerve cells that receive the pain signals.

**3 detoxifies the body**  
by cleaning 70% of the body of toxins; making deep breaths important to release all the built up carbon monoxide.

**4 lowers blood pressure**  
by slowing and regulating heart rate and improving circulation through dilation of blood vessels.

**5 helps support correct posture**  
as your lungs take up maximum space, pulling your diaphragm down and straightening your torso.

## friends fun facts:

Before Friends Together moved into our own building, we operated out of any extra space area businesses would lend us. Our very first support group took place in 1996 in a back room of the State Farm office on State Avenue. Back then, we might have had a handful of people. But soon word spread. Today we have 12 different support groups each month with up to 20 individuals attending at any given time.

*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](http://www.friendstogethermi.org) for support. Email us at [talktous@friendstogethermi.org](mailto:talktous@friendstogethermi.org)*

# DEPENDING ON OTHERS

## shows strength



LESSLEE DORT

*According to the calendar, spring has begun. Our days are longer. The weather warms. The sun shines more. Moods lift.*

With spring comes camping. I have been camping since I was a toddler. When I am in the woods, I am at my most peaceful. Stripped down to the essentials with no electronics, no media influences, and nature; I relax. Walking away from life with all its complexities and entering the woods is transformative. It doesn't happen immediately. In fact, the car ride to our haven is often filled with the chatter of daily life. All our pressures are verbally released in transit. By the time we get to our destination, our attitudes have lightened significantly.

In my mind, camping is easy, uncluttered by the world's advances. We remove ourselves from our spacious home, with all its modern-day conveniences, and purposefully go into a minimalistic situation with limited utilities, if any. From throwing a backpack on our backs to traveling with a fully functional travel trailer, camping is a guaranteed way to help me live straightforwardly.

In reality, camping takes planning. While the amount of living supplies we take with us changes depending on how we are camping, the work that goes into camping stays constant and shouldn't be overlooked. I find the preparation tasks just as enjoyable as camping - knowing our gear is in solid working condition and making sure we have what we need for the length of time we'll be gone is directly related to how much we can relax.

For a very long time, my goal was to survive on my own, solo camp. I thought I needed to prove to myself I could do it on my own; I didn't need anyone. I dedicated myself to learning everything I could.

Dependence equaled weakness to me. I used to pride myself on my independence. Self-reliance was a badge of honor. I thought I needed to be completely autonomous to be whole. If I could control everything, nothing would hurt me.

I don't think this now. Life is meant to be shared. I learned this one weekend on a quasi-solo trek. A friend

of mine went camping with me and promised to let me do all the work, unless I asked for help. I was free to prove my skills to myself and share the joy with another. In fact, by the end of the weekend I was so over the need to be alone that when my husband made the several-mile hike back to our site with fresh, piping-hot coffee, I rejoiced further. I even let him carry the pack out; literally lightening my load.

If I took the time to look inward, I'm sure I could trace this independent tendency back to a childhood betrayal. But I found that learning the origin of my behavior wasn't necessary to realign myself. What I realized was quite the opposite. My independence, coupled with my introverted nature, positioned me to live not fully, but isolated. What I discovered on my almost solo trek was my desire to share my experiences.

Now when I travel with another, I double my experiences - see life through two lenses. This newfound knowledge transferred to my whole life, not just my camping life. No longer do I need to go it alone. I have specific skills and talents. I don't have everything I need within me. And that's okay. I draw from others as they do from me. Sharing the load spreads out the weight.

I still believe that if required, I can live on my own. But I know now that true joy comes when we share both the burdens and blessings with one another.

## Support Groups

Participating in group support provides you with an opportunity to be with people who are likely to understand one another and have a common purpose.



*Sometimes we need someone to simply be there...not to fix anything or do anything particular, but just to let us know we are cared about and supported.*



Benefits include:

- Feeling less lonely, isolated or judged
- Reducing distress, depression, or anxiety
- Talking openly/ honestly about your feelings
- Improving skills to cope with challenges
- Gaining a sense of empowerment, control or hope
- Getting practical feedback about treatment options

mayoclinic.org



## NEW GROUP: join our coffee chat

Coffee & Conversation is just one of three new support groups being offered at Friends Together. Read on to learn about the opportunities available for support, hope, and friendship.

Tuesday Night Together support group has been replaced with an early morning support group. Having a group at the dinner hour no longer worked for the majority. Now, men and women with a cancer experience, and those who love them, can meet on Tuesday mornings at 8:00am.

**Coffee & Conversation** is designed to meet the needs of the cancer patient and/or the person who cares about the cancer patient. Both have a journey with cancer and can benefit

from this support group. Come together or alone.

The second new group is **Crochet & Craft**. This group is also open to men and women with cancer. By engaging in crocheting, or another craft, one can improve both mental and physical function. Try it out on Mondays at 3:00pm in April, June, August, October, and December. Bring your own materials or use ours.

**Tuesday Topics** is held on the *second Tuesday* of each month. Come by the Friends Together

office at 4:30pm. Each month we will have a different 60 minute presentation from a specialist in the health and human services field.

Tuesday Topics is open to all, whether you have a cancer journey or not. Come and learn with us.

Each presentation will be held in-person at our office *and* via Zoom for those at home, work, or on vacation. The Zoom link is available on our website calendar. See below for the monthly topic listing. Contact us for more information.

April 11, 2023 @ 4:30pm

**Prostate Recovery at any Stage** The complications after prostate surgery can be devastating. The good news is many of those complications can be improved with simple exercises, even if your surgery was years ago. Presented by Wynne Tezak, DPT

May 9, 2023 @ 4:30pm

**Fall Prevention** Falls are the leading cause of death from unintentional injuries in the home. Learn how to protect yourself from falls. Presented by Andy Marceau, Community Risk Reduction Officer

June 13, 2023 @ 4:30pm

**How Hormones Make a Difference** Learn the basics about the role hormones play in both men and women and how to identify symptoms of an imbalance. There is help to correct hormone imbalance. Presented by Kristine Spicer, PharmD

July 11, 2023 @ 4:30pm

**Managing Scar Tissue** Learn to use self-massage and stretching to improve scar mobility, decrease pain and improve range of motion following surgery. Presented by Kayla Maleport, DPT

# 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.

### **Coffee & Conversation with Friends**

Join us on Tuesday mornings from 8-9:30am for a drop-in chat. All who've had a cancer experience are welcome.

### **Good Grief**

Meets Tuesdays at 10am for those dealing with loss.

### **Mindful Movement for Healing**

Slow movement to improve balance and overall women's health during and after treatment. Meets Tuesdays at noon in January, March, May, July, September, & November.

### **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.

### **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. Offered periodically.

### **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](http://www.friendstogethermi.org)

Thank you to our local Meijer, store 282, for your donation and for showing your support to those in our community who deal with cancer. These dollars will go directly toward supporting them.

## Thank you for spreading the word

Friends Together operates on donations. Your donation of money or gas cards goes directly toward helping those in northeast Michigan with cancer.

Why should you help people with cancer? After all, they have insurance, right? Yes, but health insurance alone cannot cover all the costs involved with a cancer diagnosis.

According to the National Institutes of Health, insured patients pay a median of \$500 a month for cancer care. That doesn't include what it costs to drive to treatment daily or travel out of town for appointments. Nor does it take into consideration those who must stop working due to treatment, thus losing employer health insurance benefits.

Perhaps even more importantly, a diagnosis of cancer brings an unimaginable level of stress to both the individual and their family. Providing a safe, supportive space for all who are experiencing cancer is our main priority.

Your thoughtful donation might go toward a comfort bag full of goodies to make treatment a little nicer or a patient planner that helps keep track of all the schedules and medications. It could go toward paying for insurance on our vans or paying for our small staff of compassionate individuals who are here for everyone who walks through our doors and says,

"I have cancer."

On behalf of them, thank you.

“ Giving is not just about making a donation.  
It is about making a difference. ”  
Kathy Calvin

Spring 2023



## 5 opportunities to help show your support

### APRIL 2023 GAS CARD CHALLENGE

your donation of gas cards or money toward gas cards will directly help those with cancer get to their appointments.

### MAY 6, 2023 POP-UP BOUTIQUE

See you at the Thunder Bowl Lanes on US23S in Alpena! Shop until drop.  
(details on pg10)

### JUNE 3, 2023 GOLF SCRAMBLE

Gather your team of 4 for this year's scramble at River's Edge. Tee-off at 9am.

### JUNE 23, 2023 DRIVE THRU FUNDRAISER

That's right, here's your chance to donate because your heart tells you to.

### JULY 23, 2023 PIG ROAST

Pick up your pulled pork dinner with all the trimmings, all while helping your neighbor.

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**SHELLY GIBBS**

# TRANSPORTATION & LODGING

## Cancer treatment and logistics

*In February 2023, Friends Together’s volunteer drivers drove 5,585 miles getting patients to and from their critical cancer care appointments.*

Our transportation and lodging support services are free to those dealing with a cancer diagnosis.

We currently have 2 vans and 25 volunteer drivers that spend countless hours on the road to assure that cancer patients can get to their critical care appointments.

We have great cancer care right here in northeast Michigan. But oftentimes our friends with cancer need to travel beyond our community for specialized testing or treatment.

Getting to and from home to our local cancer center

can be challenging enough. But when treatment takes you out of town do not worry. There are ways we can help you manage the travel and the cost.

As soon as you or someone you know is in need of transportation or lodging assistance related to their cancer treatment, please contact us.

**(989) 356-3231**

## Jim McCullum

### 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.*

One of our dynamic volunteer drivers is Jim McCullum. Jim has been a volunteer driver for Friends Together for many years as a way of helping others. Jim stated that when his wife, Jo, was diagnosed with breast cancer, they were devastated. They turned to Friends Together for help dealing with this trauma. They got the help and guidance that they needed and saw a way to “give back”. Jim started driving because it was something he could do to help other cancer patients and their families.

Friends Together drivers become a part of the Friends Together Family. Sometimes it is because of their own personal experience or journey, or that of a family member, neighbor, co-worker or loved one who has had a cancer experience.





# Salesforce: breaking out of the paper pencil era



*The technology  
you use  
impresses no  
one.  
The experience  
you create  
with it is  
everything.*

Sean Gerety



Friends Together is happily learning new skills to better serve our communities, thanks to a grant from the First Federal Legacy Foundation and the Optimize Main Street Program

In the coming months visitors to Friends Together will notice our laptops more present during conversations. This is because we will be making every effort to better serve each person who comes to us for support.

With the integration of Salesforce, a relationship tracking software program, we will be able to see your needs more clearly. We will be able to

communicate with you on a more timely basis. Plus, we will better anticipate the needs of our communities. Seeing need-trends will help us better budget our funds to best serve the cancer community. Friends Together offers a multitude of support options: from gas cards to patient planners and emotional support. Not everyone needs the same tools. Finding the perfect combination to

best serve you on your journey through cancer is our goal.

We will also be able to keep more accessible records, allowing us to report on a moment's notice. This opens up our time to be with you when you need us, visit you during infusion, introduce our services to others, and generally be even more available when you need us and where you need us.

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## gas card challenge: getting there is half the battle

Happening now!

Why do we hold a gas card challenge every year? Because the cost of getting oneself to treatment is burdensome at best.

Last month alone, we helped 120 people have enough fuel to get to treatment by giving them a gas gift card.

One way we support our neighbors with cancer is by taking the sting out of the cost fuel. Why?

Because a cancer diagnosis often brings with it great financial stress.

Friends Together supports our neighbors with cancer.

By donating gas cards or making a monetary donation, you too can help your neighbors. No one should be faced with the decision not to treat because they can't afford transportation.

# POP-UP BOUTIQUE: a fun shopping experience

May 6, 2023 @ Thunder Bowl Lanes

We are having a Pop-Up Boutique on May 6, at the Thunder Bowl Lanes on US23 S in Alpena. Pop in between 9am-3pm for great deals.

We will also have independent vendors with tables set up. Bring your friends. hop for Mothers Day. Treat yourself.

During this event, we will select the winner of the beautiful donated quilt we received from the Have-A-Heart quilters of the Alpena Senior Center. Raffle tickets on sale at Friends Together.

The proceeds from this fundraiser will go toward helping folks with cancer. If you have some like-new jewelry, purses, or artwork that you would like to donate to our Pop-Up Boutique, please drop your goods off at our office before May 3.




**Pop-Up BOUTIQUE**  
Shop & Win

Quilt made by Have-A-Heart Quilters—Alpena Senior Center. Raffle tickets 3 for \$5.00. Winner announced at 3pm

- Like new jewelry
- purses, artwork & more
- Chinese Raffle
- Bake Sale
- Concessions by The Burger Shack

Vendors  
Park Lane Jewelry Northern Finits by Daniel  
Paragona's Closet Rosewood and Jade  
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**May 6, 2023**  
@ The Thunder Bowl Lanes  
North Entrance - 2192 US23, Alpena  
9am-3pm




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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

Roxanne Foor  
Jami Crudden Murray  
Beverly Attwell  
Dell Robbins  
Deborah Keyser  
Suzanne Lawson

Robert Fairbanks  
Albert Schaudt  
Virginia Schultz  
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Friends Together is Celebrating 27 Years!

**Thank you Friends and Volunteers!**



expires 2/29/24



## FRIENDS TOGETHER

*We Help People with Cancer, and their loved ones too*

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Alpena, MI 49707

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### spotlight on services

one-on-one emotional support group support  
gas cards transportation lodging wigs comfort bags  
patient planner hats healincomfort shirts  
bras & forms and more



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Visit our website, click on the QR Code to the right with your cell phone's camera, mail, or stop by Friends Together with purchased gas cards, money for us to buy gas cards, or your credit card information. All amounts help us help those with cancer.

