

Local cancer survivor launches annual fundraiser ahead of Terry Fox Run

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Shelburne resident Joan Wallace has launched her annual fundraising campaign ahead of the 45th annual Terry Fox Run on Sept. 14.

"It's something small I can do that makes a big difference, a positive in lives of patients and their loved ones," said Wallace. "If the research can extend lives, or the quality of patients lives while receiving treatment, I'll do whatever it takes to help."

In 1978, at the same time Terry Fox was facing his fight with cancer, Joan Wallace was facing her own battle. Diagnosed with stage 4 non-Hodgkin Lymphoma and ovarian cancer, she underwent radiation therapy in 1978, chemotherapy in 1979, and numerous surgeries.

"I was so taken with his courage and determination and the want to make a difference. He felt he needed to make a difference in people's lives," recalled Wallace about seeing Fox take up his Marathon of Hope 45 years ago.

Wallace has participated in the Terry Fox run for the last 30 years and even organized the local community run from 2008 to 2018 before passing the torch to her family.

"It didn't matter what it was doing, rain or shine or sleet, I've been out in it all, because I thought he did it. Terry had the courage and determination to try and make a difference, so I've done it ever since."

While the Terry Fox Run has always remained a long-standing and close part of Wallace's life, the annual event has held particular significance for her over the last two years.

In May of 2024, after attending a routine mammogram scan, a lump was found in Wallace's left breast and was later confirmed to be cancerous. Just two months later, as she awaited the start of her chemotherapy, she was diagnosed with colon cancer.

Wallace started chemotherapy in October 2024 and finished her treatments in December with a ringing out of the cancer bell.

"I got a hold of that bell and I beat the heck out of it. I said to the nurse 'I'm beating the heck out of this bell because I want to beat the heck out of cancer,'" she said. "Since 1978, I've lived my life to never give up and to have a positive attitude. Terry certainly never gave up."

Speaking with the Free Press, Wallace noted the importance of continuing Terry's efforts to find a cure and raise awareness.

"I don't know a person that hasn't been touched by [cancer] in some way. We have to find a cure and improve people's lives," said Wallace.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, two in five Canadians are expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, while approximately one in four are expected to die from the disease.

Terry Fox embarked on his Marathon of Hope in St. John's, Newfoundland, on April 12, 1980. After running nearly 42 kilometres a day for 143 days (a total of 5,373 kilometres), on Sept. 1, 1980, he was forced to stop outside of Thunder Bay, Ont., because cancer had appeared in his lungs. Terry Fox died on June 28, 1981, at the age of 22.

To date, the Terry Fox Foundation has raised over \$850 million for cancer research and funded more than 1,300 innovative cancer research projects.

Last year, while in the midst of her second battle with cancer, Wallace was able to raise more than \$2,500 for the Terry Fox Foundation.

This year, she is hoping to raise even more, setting a fundraising goal of \$3,000.

?You always have to reach for the stars,? said Wallace.

At the time of print, Wallace's fundraiser has collected just over \$1,800.

Those interested in helping Wallace raise money to support the Terry Fox Foundation and find a cure for cancer can donate to the fundraiser by visiting: run.terryfox.ca/page/joanwallace.