

July 3, 2024

Maggie Bras Family Foundation

9715 Winston Churchill Blvd
Brampton, ON L6X 0A4

Maggie Bras
Leah Lambrakis Bras
Paul Ivany
Savannah Snyder
Darien Brass

Supporting Breast Cancer Patients in Canada

Dear Maggie, Leah, Paul, Savannah and Darien,

I cannot begin this report without thanking each of you for the continuous and generous support of the Breast Cancer Support Fund and our programs. Your faithful partnership enables us to make a powerful impact for Canadian women and their families who are living in poverty and battling breast cancer.

BCSF Board

After years of keeping the size of the board at a minimum of four, we took an ambitious leap forward and added 12 new board members in December of 2023. To jump start the onboarding process, we held a strategic planning session in January of 2024. The session did not alter our primary mission but served to strengthen our resolve to communicate more broadly about the significant challenges experienced because of a breast cancer diagnosis and how as a board, we could develop the resources to support more breast cancer patients in need.

As a result of working with Humber PR grad students this past year, we developed a proposal called the Neighbour Network. We have just begun to use this as a fundraising tool to encourage corporations to become part of the community supporting BCSF initiatives.

PROGRAMS

The **Financial Assistance Program** continues to be our only national program.

The **Meal Support Program**, a regional program available in Ontario and all of Atlantic Canada has received funding from the Meighan Foundation a to support Ontario patients and most recently a two year commitment from the J&W Family Foundation of \$35,000 for two years for patients living in Atlantic Canada.

Breast cancer remains one of the most prevalent and devastating health issues. Despite advancements in medical research and treatment options, *prevention* continues to be a critical component missing in reducing the impact of the disease and in understanding breast health. (and a particular interest of mine). We developed a webinar on **Breast Health** that is suitable for companies to incorporate into their health and wellness programs. The webinar was developed and will be presented by Cara Rosenbloom, a new board member who is a Toronto-based dietitian and a writer and noted health journalist. Education and proactive measures are key in empowering people to take control of their health and reduce their risk of breast cancer.

Community Partners

David Yurman, a luxury jewelry brand, has held an in-store fundraiser twice during this fiscal year. The leadership team at the David Yurman has made a committment to expand their support by including a new store in Montreal in fall 2024 and in Vancouver in 2025.

Financials

The fiscal year for the Breast Cancer Support Fund is July 31st. Last years' financial statement is attached. Starting with this new fiscal year we will be doing quarterly reports as the once year financial statements are inadequate for our purposes.

As of June 30, 2024, financial estimates are as follows:

Revenue: \$259, 597 (Last year \$209,743)

(This includes a \$25,000 sponsorship for our signature event which is scheduled to place on Thursday October 10th. Depending on the recommendation of a new accountant, we may defer this amount so that this revenue appears in the same fiscal year as the event.)

Program expenses: \$ 145,000 (estimate to date). (Last year \$138,000)

Breast Cancer Patients

Too many low-income Canadians are at the intersection of housing and food insecurity. Add in the extra challenge of a breast cancer diagnosis and together we are supporting some of the most vulnerable women in our community. Single mothers continue to be a very large portion of the patients to whom we provide assistance.

We recently received an application from a 35 year old married woman with two children (6,8) who lives in Guelph. She recently completed school to become an RN and so has student loans. She had only been working as an RN for less than a month when she was diagnosed with breast cancer and therefore does not qualify for Sick Benefits through Employment insurance. Her husband recently lost his job and has only been able to find part-time work for now as he juggles child care and support for his wife.

Just this week, I spoke with Nina, a 46 year old self-employed cleaning woman, who makes \$44,000 per year which likely is barely enough to provide her and her 15 year old daughter with basic living expenses in Toronto. Nina is undergoing months of chemotherapy before she has surgery and then will finish with radiation. When I called to speak with her about being enrolled in the Meal Support Program, she was on the bus returning from an appointment. She started to cry when I explained the program works and how we'll be able to support her in the coming months. Nina said she felt very inadequate about not being able to provide good meals for her daughter and wanted to let me know how much she appreciated the support.

The application form we received from Gina Davis (age 34) indicated that she and her three children were living in Scarborough. I left a message for her asking her to call me so I could tell her about our programs. I didn't realize at the time, that she screens her calls and only returns calls to people she knows. It wasn't hard to discern that she has fled an abusive relationship and now has to deal with months of treatment for breast cancer. After explaining how the Meal Support Program would work for her and her 14 year, old (her youngest two are 2 and 11 months and therefore too young to be in the program) Gina let me know that this is currently at a shelter in Toronto but very soon is going to be temporarily staying with a friend in St Catharines until she can find a place to live.

Alexandra Sedore is a single, homeless woman who was referred to Casey House by the hospital who is treating her for breast cancer. She is not terminal but Cassey House will allow her to live there for six months while she completes her treatment. Casey House provides transportation to and from the hospital for her. At her request, we provided her with funds to buy a wig.

A testimonial:

Hello Everyone,

(When I say everyone I mean EVERYONE from the founder Donna as well as all the volunteers and donors)

In January, my life turned upside down, I heard the words "you have cancer" and life has since never been the same.

I am a 37 year old single mom to a preschooler. Like most in my community just making ends meet is a struggle lately, I was just getting ready to tackle my holiday debt when I had to go on a leave from work and step back from my business. My daughter and I somehow made it thru the first 6 months and surgery, with the little financial help the government provides. I was so worried to hear my help ran out from the government so I was faced with either doing everything to save my life or go back to work and make sure my daughter is taken care of.

Social worker from the hospital told me about the breast cancer support fund and helped me apply.

I cannot even explain how grateful I am for the generosity that we have received. Being able to not worry about our meals is amazing. From the cost of healthy ingredients to the time and energy it takes me to make them. The healthy easy meals to my door gives my body the rest it needs and even giving me extra time with my daughter instead of the kitchen.

On top of covering our daily meals the cheque I received helped greatly with getting utilities caught up and other expenses that just seem to grow.

Now that I'm entering hopefully my final stage in my treatment journey, tackling work, daily treatments and home life all together is going to be a whirlwind but having a delicious meal with no worry attached makes things that bit easier.

Thank you so much

Sincerely, Alexandra Guthrie

Clearly, social workers are not referring middle class patients who have families for support and the resources they need to get them through a difficult time. However, I am still astonished at how many of the women we support are already leading challenging lives and then a breast cancer diagnosis just adds to their stress and worry for themselves and their family.

It's truly difficult for me to put into words, what our partnership and your support of the Breast Cancer Support Fund means to me as we support some of the most vulnerable women in communities across Canada. Thank You.

With a grateful heart,



Donna Sheehan