

AUTUMN 2023

How you're making a difference for New Zealanders facing cancer

Newscan

Ayden's Story
*"I couldn't
have done it
without nurse
Angelique!"*

See inside

Ground-breaking new research
is underway

Sandra's impactful stay with
the Cancer Society

Jon's gift for the future



**Cancer
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku
o Aotearoa

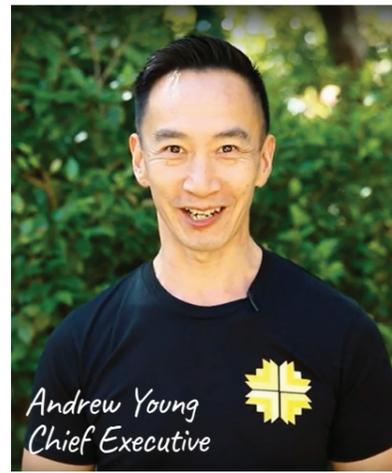
Welcome to the autumn edition of Newscan 2023!

It has been a difficult start to the year for many parts of the country, with several extreme weather events occurring including flooding and a tropical cyclone. I do hope you and your family are safe and well. At Cancer Society Auckland Northland we are thankful that with the help of our incredible team, we were able to continue all support services during this time.

Sadly, cancer doesn't happen in isolation, and these unexpected events add an additional layer of uncertainty and stress during what is already a very challenging time. Cancelled appointments, rescheduled treatments, and

added financial pressure can feel overwhelming. But because of you, cancer patients don't have to go through these challenging times alone. At the Cancer Society, our focus on providing free wrap-around care is stronger than ever.

As you read the following pages, you will find that they are full of inspirational stories from patients and supporters alike. I hope you enjoy seeing how your support is truly making an impact on New Zealanders facing cancer. From exciting new research to protect future generations, to our invaluable specialist nurses, free Cancer Society accommodation, counselling support and more.



Andrew Young
Chief Executive

It's loyal supporters like you who make all of this possible. So thank you, please know how much your kindness and compassion are appreciated.

Andrew Young
Chief Executive

Ground-Breaking Bone Marrow Research Funded by You!

Bone marrow transplants can be lifesaving in the treatment of high-risk blood cancers such as leukaemia, which is the most common childhood cancer in New Zealand. The current transplant process is gruelling for patients and not always successful, but research led by Dr Julie Spicer is looking to reduce the impact and improve success rates.

Dr Spicer's research is focused on blocking the protein Perforin, which will suppress the immune system in a much more targeted, effective way than chemotherapy alone. Benefits on this approach should include a higher success rate, with less side effects and

quicker recovery. This exciting development could be lifesaving for the six New Zealanders diagnosed with blood cancers every day.

"I chose cancer research because I love chemistry and the challenge of making molecules, but it's pointless if you're not doing something worthwhile with it. Everyone knows someone who's suffered from cancer or has experienced it themselves."

"Cancer Society funding is so important. The nature of research is that you're living from year to year, spending a lot of time writing research grant applications, most of which go unfunded. It's hard



Dr Julie Spicer

to describe how important the security of Cancer Society funding is. I don't think we would exist, certainly not in our current form, without it." - Dr Julie Spicer

By supporting Cancer Society, you are enabling lifechanging research to continue around the country. If you want to hear more about this incredible work, head to <https://youtu.be/LelroZXbl30>.

Ayden "Hit the Jackpot" with Nurse Angelique

Ayden Morgan was just 22 when he was diagnosed with Chondrosarcoma – a rare form of bone cancer located in the cartilage on the base of his skull. Two surgeries failed to remove the tumour in Ayden's skull and radiation therapy was the last option. But not just any type of radiation therapy – Ayden needed proton beam therapy; a treatment not available in New Zealand.

Since recovering from his first surgery, Ayden had faced an uphill battle, with the recovery taking a huge toll on Ayden's physical and mental health. Loss of vision and extreme fatigue from the surgery impacted Ayden's confidence and his mother, Kelli, was worried. That's when she turned to Cancer Society for support.

"When we found Angelique, we seriously hit the jackpot. We were so lucky," says Kelli.

Cancer Society nurse Angelique Ensor encouraged Ayden to join a weekly walking support group made up of others going through similar cancer journey's, and helped him access a local psychologist. Spending time outdoors with other people going through a similar cancer experience gave Ayden a positive focus.

Ayden's proton beam therapy was scheduled for April 2020 but as Covid-19 swept across the world, his appointment was cancelled. Ayden and his family were devastated. With proton beam therapy off the table, the only option would be a regular course of radiation therapy, even though they knew it had little chance of success. It felt like a death sentence for Ayden.

But Cancer Society nurse Angelique was not about to give up.

Angelique found two centres still accepting international patients. But time was running out.



Ayden and Kelli



Ayden and his sister Natahlia

"Ayden was getting bad. I really do believe the stress made the symptoms worse. The headaches couldn't be controlled with medication. He was in bed a lot," says Kelli.

"I don't know what would have happened if it wasn't for Angelique. She didn't stop. She was there every step of the way."

Thankfully Ayden was accepted by a centre in Wales and was able to receive life-saving treatment. Since returning home, Ayden's scans have shown the tumour has stabilized and there's evidence of shrinkage. He's still coming to terms with impaired vision, but his headaches have improved, and the frightening seizures have stopped. There's a lot to be grateful for, says Kelli.

"Angelique's been there every step. She's been Ayden's biggest supporter, cheering him on all the way. I always felt heard and was never made to feel like I was overreacting, which was really reassuring."

"Angelique's not just good at listening," says Ayden. "She's good at action too. I couldn't have done it without her."

Our vital nurses and support groups are only made possible through the generosity of people like you - and we can't thank you enough. Your support ensures cancer patients don't have to face cancer alone.

Sandra's impactful stay with Cancer Society

Sandra Haigh signed up for a breast screening shortly after her 45th birthday, in her words: "I thought well, it's a free resource so I might as well take advantage of it". After receiving a call back to undergo a second scan, Sandra was shocked to learn that a small mass had been discovered on her right breast. It was cancer.

"I just kind of sat there like a statue and I was thinking, how do you process that? All I could hear was "cancer, you have cancer." I was shocked. I was just numb."

"You think, man, I've been healthy my whole life and now my body has let me down in the worst possible way. And it's really really hard to deal with."

Devastatingly, this was not Sandra's first experience with cancer. Sandra's own mother had passed away from leukaemia when she was just eight years old, and both her grandmother and great-grandmother had breast cancer.

"It was difficult telling my dad because of his previous experience losing his wife, my mother, so that was hard."

Immediately after her diagnosis, Sandra began treatment. After two surgeries, and six months of chemotherapy, exhaustion and nausea had become part of her daily routine. But for Sandra, additional radiation treatment was still needed, at a hospital located hours from home.

Thankfully, because of supporters like you, Sandra was able to receive free accommodation at our Cancer Society Lodge, close to treatment.

"I had my first introduction to the Cancer Society Lodge, which was just a magical, magical place. I had five weeks of radiation every day."



"I had a lot of anxiety, but it was such an amazing place because everybody was in the same boat. You didn't even have to talk sometimes, you just sat, and everybody knew you were feeling like shit, but it was okay because they understood."

It was an experience that really opened my eyes to how courageous humanity can be in the face of a crisis. And the staff and nurses were astonishing."

Being able to complete her vital treatment from the comfort of the Cancer Society Lodge made an immense difference to Sandra's journey. In her words, without this service "it would have been that much more depressing, more difficult, more stressful...". What's more, Sandra explained that

without our free accommodation and care, some of the patients she met at the lodge would have missed out on life-saving treatment altogether.

Sandra was so moved by the impact of the Cancer Society's work, that she signed up for our Signature monthly giving programme as soon as she was able.



"I have supported the Cancer Society on a monthly basis ever since I left that cancer lodge... The work that they do often goes unheralded, and it shouldn't be."

What people want to know is - is my money going to a good place? And the answer to that is YES - it's going to a really good place. It's a very very worthwhile organisation to give to."

"I found so much of my anxiety and stress was removed from the awful black cloud that cancer is, through my stay at the Cancer Society lodge. And it brings patients together. You're all bald and you've got holes in your throat or whatever, but it doesn't matter because you sit around and play cards and talk. Connecting patients, it's amazing."

We are so grateful to our community of donors who choose to give monthly to support those facing cancer. Many, like Sandra, know from personal experience how vital our services can be. Monthly giving is crucial for Cancer Society funding and helps us plan our support into the future, ensuring we can be there for everyone who needs us.



If you would like to join our incredible community of Signature monthly donors, simply complete the monthly giving portion of the donation form enclosed, go online at www.cancer.org.nz or give our friendly team a call at 0800 123 230.



Breast cancer

Every year more than 3,000 women and a small number of men are diagnosed with breast cancer.

Breast cancer symptoms

Signs and symptoms of breast cancer may include:

- a lump in the breast
- the skin on the breast is thicker or dimpled (it can look like an orange peel)
- a lump or swelling in one or both armpits
- a change in the shape or size of the breast
- the nipple turning in, unless the nipple has always been turned in
- a rash on the nipple
- discharge or bleeding from the nipple
- pain or discomfort in the breast that does not go away

Breasts naturally change with age, and it is normal for some changes during your menstrual cycle.

Having these symptoms does not mean you have breast cancer, but it is important to have any changes checked by your doctor.

Whirlwinds, Wigs, and Giving Back

Margaret Black is no stranger to the Cancer Society. It was 27 years ago when she started her own cancer journey after being diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer at the age of 50. Since then, Margaret has been committed to helping others affected by cancer, from singing performances, teaching patchwork in therapy groups, and even holding events to raise money to support the Cancer Society.

She has many stories from her years of overcoming cancer, from stage-side giggles, to chasing her chemotherapy wig up Birkenhead Avenue.

"I was shopping in Birkenhead and as I turned the corner the wind just howled. About a quarter of the way up my wig took off! So I was chasing, running up the main street after my wig... I just started laughing because I thought, how stupid I must look, it must look like I'm chasing a cat!"

I eventually caught it and went into a nearby shop and asked if I could use their changing room to put my wig back on! Experiences like this... it's all part of the [cancer] journey..."

Now living in a village, Margaret continues to support those affected by cancer, through a monthly donation to the Cancer Society.

Margaret Black performing in Orewa just three days after she finished chemotherapy. The chair pictured behind her was brought on stage in case she needed to sit down during the performance.



"Oh gosh yes, I think it's important to give back. I'm a great believer that you need to be good to people, you need to be kind to people. I want to help where I can."

"If you can help someone that's going through the same issue, and be there for them, it means a great deal. So, if you are able, please give whichever amount you feel comfortable."

It's easy to join our regular giving programme. Simply complete and return the form enclosed, head to www.cancer.org.nz or get in touch with friendly donor care team on 0800 123 230.

Thank you so much Margaret, for your incredible support over many years and the huge impact you've made possible.

72 holes. 1 day.



Ryan Blain, Josh Carmine and Ben Peattie completing The Longest Day.

Stuff Limited

It has been wonderful to see our community turn out and support The Longest Day, a golfing endurance event that raises money for people affected by cancer. Between December and January, 192 golfers across Auckland and Northland undertook the challenge, raising an incredible total of \$157,932!

For golfers Ryan Blain, Josh Carmine and Ben Peattie, it was a personal connection to cancer that motivated them to get involved. Peattie, who works as a registered nurse, has seen the toll cancer can take on families first-hand.

"Dealing with cancer is basically part of my every day and Cancer Society is always there when they need to be."

"For me, it's also a very personal thing with my dad having passed away from cancer when I was a lot younger so that's a huge driver as to why I'm doing it."

Thank you to all who participated! If you are interested in taking up the golf clubs next year, keep an eye out for registrations opening in November.

What's On?

- 1. Small steps make a huge difference!** On the 1st of April, we held our much-loved Relay For Life event at AUT Millennium. It was incredible to see so many Kiwis get involved - celebrating cancer survivors, remembering loved ones lost to cancer, and fighting back by raising awareness and funds for the Cancer Society. Thank you to all who joined us on such a special day.
- 2. This May, Jump for Cancer!** Experience the indescribable rush of jumping out of a plane while raising funds for a great cause. And, if you raise \$1,000 or more, Cancer Society will cover the cost of your skydive! Find out more at www.jumpforcancer.org.nz
- 3. The Games Fair is back!** Support New Zealanders facing cancer at the country's biggest tabletop convention! For the entire weekend of the 29th and 30th of April, The Cloud is being transformed into a tabletop haven. Board Games, Dungeons and Dragons, Card Games and more will be on offer, so come join in the fun. Buy your tickets at www.gamesfair.org.nz.



If you are interested in supporting Cancer Society and want to learn more about our events coming up, get in touch via Events@akcansoc.org.nz.

Making a difference now and for the future.

Having gone through a cancer diagnosis after supporting his partner during her own, Jon is well aware of the mental and emotional toll that cancer treatment can have on patients and their families. That's why Jon became closely involved with the Cancer Society through volunteering as a cancer patient driver, a decision that led him to leave a legacy.

"After my treatment, I really felt I had to do something, otherwise I think I would've gone stir crazy at home. I volunteer to drive patients to and from their appointments - it gives them a smooth and trouble-free experience during a very hard time in their lives. When I talk to the patients I work with, I can see straight away how relieved they are to get help."

While volunteering at the Cancer Society, Jon came to realise how closely the charity relies on community support.

"The Cancer Society relies solely on donations and receives no direct government funding, so without donors their services would have to be stripped back and they wouldn't be able to help as many people as they do now."

After 16 years of volunteering at the Cancer Society, Jon knows how important the services are to families and has decided to leave a lasting legacy to help ensure vital support for cancer patients will continue well into the future.



"Having had family with cancer and being personally affected myself, it was a no-brainer [to leave a gift] as far as I was concerned. A lot of the patients I meet really appreciate things like transport and accommodation during their treatment. It takes the pressure off and helps makes them feel more relaxed and at peace. I think that benefits them a great deal with their therapy and recovery."

“After my treatment, I really felt I had to do something...”

Thanks to generous volunteers and donors like Jon, the Cancer Society is able to support thousands of cancer patients and their families every year. Jon's wonderful gift in his Will will make all the difference

to families affected by cancer in the future, by helping to provide expert care and advice and fund life-saving cancer research.

If you would like to know more about leaving a life-changing gift in your will, please call Ashleigh on 09 930 7172 or email legacy@akcansoc.org.nz.

If you are interested in becoming a Cancer Society volunteer driver please contact volunteers@akcansoc.org.nz

Thank you so much for your incredible support! We couldn't do it without you.

Cancer Society Auckland Northland

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