



NATALIA'S STORY

One thought rose to the surface: "one day at a time, one worry at a time".

by Maria De Cort

When Natalia first heard the word "cancer," everything in her world shifted in an instant. A proud Chilean, she had built a life far from home but in that moment, distance felt heavier than ever. Yet amid the shock, one thought rose to the surface: "one day at a time, one worry at a time".

Natalia's diagnosis of bilateral breast cancer came in August 2025. She had no family history and no warning signs. On turning 45 last year she received notification she was eligible for a mammogram and it was that routine screening that revealed something suspicious and set her on an unexpected path.

In those early days post-diagnosis, Natalia felt the weight of navigating decisions, treatments, and emotions. But then her friend Paulina mentioned someone who could help: Tara from the Cancer Society in Queenstown. After their very first meeting, Natalia knew she had found an anchor.



From that point on, Tara became a steady presence. "She was someone I could trust," Natalia recalls. She opened a door to a world of support Natalia hadn't known existed, such as connecting Natalia with a volunteer driver to take her to medical appointments in Invercargill. When Natalia struggled to leave the house, Tara came to her instead, arriving with thoughtful gifts and the simple, powerful question: "What do you need?"

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CANSHOP VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

CanShop are looking for volunteers to join the team

Help us turn quality second-hand finds into support for Cancer Society Central Lakes

Contact Laura to find out more
laura.mcquaid@southerncancer.org.nz

Your time. Their hope.

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Need Support?

Contact your local Cancer Navigators
03 442 4281



CHALLENGES & CHANGES - Dr Lucy Hone Wanaka Community Event

An evening bringing people together to explore how we navigate challenge and change in our lives.

Drawing from science and lived experience, Dr Lucy Hone will share insights on resilience. Her globally renowned Ted Talk '3 Secrets of Resilient People', provides simple evidence based steps to help cope with adversity—a must watch for everyone! Her talk in Wanaka is likely to be just as inspiring!

She will then join Te Kura o Tititea Mount Aspiring College Principal Nicola Jacobsen in a live conversation about what truly helps individuals and communities through difficult times.

Lake Wanaka Centre, 89 Ardmore Street
Wednesday 22nd April 7pm - 8.30pm

Tickets on sale at: [pathwanaka.org.nz/what's on/events](http://pathwanaka.org.nz/what's-on/events)



Free 6 Week Creative Wellbeing Workshop
at Happiness House
Starts 26th March 10am - 12pm

In this guided small group series, art will be used as a way to reflect, express, and build practical tools for wellbeing. This series isn't about being artistic - it's about finding new ways to understand, explore and express yourself.

No art experience needed.
Visit Humanitix to secure your spot

QUEENSTOWN COMMUNITY EVENT How the Irish teach us to live, love & die

Join author Kevin Toolis for this free event as he shares insights from his Irish upbringing, where mortality is embraced openly rather than hiding it. By keeping the dead at home, holding communal vigils, and celebrating the deceased's life with stories, the Irish transform death from a taboo into a communal, cathartic experience.

In many modern societies, death has become something that is often hidden away or spoken about only within clinical settings. Kevin's work encourages communities to reclaim these conversations — recognising that caring for people at the end of life is not only a medical responsibility, but also a deeply human and communal one. Perhaps we too can all find a better way to deal with our mortality -by living and loving as the Irish do.

Queenstown Country Club, 420 Frankton-Ladies Mile Highway
Sunday 29th March 1pm - 2.30pm

RSVP to office@hospicesouthland.org.nz/ 03 211 3081

Come to Chant! Free Series

Aum Namah Sivaay for wellness of people around us.

Create a sound together that cleanses, purifies and brings positive energy within our existing aura.

No previous experience required to be a part of these sessions.

Free sessions to be held at
Wanaka Community Hub.
Facilitated by Meetu

6.30am to 7.30am

17th Mar, 15th April,
15th May, 13th Jun,
12th Jul, 28th Aug



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**Cancer
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku
o Aotearoa

“She gave me direction when I felt lost, guided me with compassion, and offered reassurance when I needed it most.”

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More support awaited Natalia in Christchurch during radiation treatment. Walking into the Canterbury Cancer Centre, Natalia felt something she never expected: gratitude. “I thought wow... I am so lucky I got cancer,” so moved was she by the warmth, comfort, and attention to every detail in the home away from home for her and her partner José.

“Our own ensuite room. A mini fridge. A space in the pantry. Living rooms with books and games. Little thoughtful gifts. Every single detail had been carefully considered with oncology patients in mind. It felt like entering a different world. A place where I could connect with others who truly understood. Where I could book counselling, physio, a nutritionist – not just treatment for my body, but care for my whole self. It became my little getaway from the ‘real world’ during one of the most challenging chapters of my life.”

Looking back, Natalia now speaks about cancer without fear: “You don’t need to go through this by yourself. The most important part is not feeling alone.”

With the Cancer Society beside her – through Tara’s care, the Canterbury Cancer Centre, supportive counselling, and practical help – she never was. As Natalia moves forward, she’s found herself inspired to transform her journey into something creative and unexpectedly joyful.



Drawing on her theatre background – and the wide range of reactions she received when telling people about her diagnosis – she is now developing a stand-up comedy show about her experience with cancer. Her goal is to debut it this October, during Breast Cancer Awareness Month, with proceeds supporting the Cancer Society. Natalia hopes the show will help be both entertaining and educational, offering humour, honesty, and connection in equal measure. Stay tuned for more information on this later in the year, as well as opportunities for the community to get on board and support bringing Natalia’s fundraising to life.

Coffee Groups

Let's Make Your Day Better!
Join us for coffee, laughter, and friendly chats
Family, friends & support people welcome

Buzzstop Cafe, Frankton
First Monday of the Month
10am - 11am

Forage Cafe, Cromwell
Last Monday of the Month
12.30pm - 1.30pm

Re-Introducing

An easier way to do your cervical screening

I've been in NZ for two and a half years!

Zodiac Sign: Virgo

Easy to do for most people

Helps you take care of your health and wellbeing

Loves being discreet and having privacy

Non-Judgemental

Quicker than the smear test

I don't need a speculum*

For the people who want to do it themselves.

All about making you feel comfortable.

THE HPV SELF-TEST

FORTNIGHTLY WANAKA WALKING GROUP
Wednesday 25th March 12pm

Lakefront Car Park Wanaka
Short & longer walk options & option to join for coffee afterwards

NEW QUEENSTOWN WALKING GROUP
Wednesday 25th March 5 pm

Meet outside Cancer Society – next to Unichem Remarkables

Providing practical and emotional support

We can help people with any cancer.
Self referrals are welcome.
Phone or drop into our centre.

Our services include:

- One-on-one support
- Transport to treatment
- Accommodation
- Financial impact
- Counselling
- Physio
- Support groups
- Equipment loan
- Headwear service
- Prosthesis advice
- Online support – cancer.org.nz

Cancer helpline

0800 CANCER (226 237)

Otago Central Lakes Cancer Society
Remarkables Park Town Centre
54/ 12 Hawthorne Drive

03 442 4281

centralotago@southerncancer.org.nz

Here to help across Otago Central Lakes!

Tara Strahan

Community Manager

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Zoe Arden

Cancer Navigator

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Shona Bain

Cancer Navigator

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Laura McQuaid

Community Coordinator

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Cancer Psychosocial Service

A dedicated Southern DHB psychosocial service for individuals impacted by cancer.

CPS recognises that a diagnosis affects your body, mind and emotions.

Their dedicated team of counsellors and social workers are available to support you either face-to-face or online.

Phone: 0800 222 158

Community Outreach

Wanaka Hub

Wednesday & Friday Fri 9-1pm

Ranfurly Medical Centre – Community Support Hub

Last Thursday of the month 10am-1pm

Queenstown

Monday – Friday 9am – 4pm

Patient Empowerment Programme

The Patient Empowerment Programme (PEP) is designed to help you connect with others and support recovery. We still have 20 fully funded places available for the programme.

For more info contact Zoe

cancerpep@southerncancer.org.nz



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Cancer Society

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku
o Aotearoa

Cancer Society Ball

A NIGHT
OF GLAMOUR

Millennium Hotel, Queenstown
Saturday, 28th March at 6:30 pm.

A night built around elegance, purpose, and the kind of generosity that strengthens communities across our region. All money raised from this event will help the Cancer Society continue to support and advocate for those impacted by cancer in our community.

Tickets are \$260 per person, or \$2,600 for a table of 10 guests. This includes canapés on arrival, a delectable three-course menu inclusive of beverages, live and silent auctions, fantastic entertainment, and a live band to dance the night away.