

People Make all the Difference

How survivor Debora Prokopich Buzzi found comfort throughout her battle with breast cancer

By Maryanne Matthews

In January of 2007, Debora Prokopich Buzzi's life was forever changed when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Debora Prokopich Buzzi was only 40 years old with no family history of breast cancer. She had no symptoms. Imagine how shocked she was to discover that she had two tumours in her breast, both of different origins. "It was definitely a scary time full of uncertainty," she says. Fortunately, the Linda Buchan Centre was there to help.

"It was important for me to know exactly what I was dealing with, so I



Survivor Debora Prokopich Buzzi credits the amazing care she received for the comfort and confidence she had throughout her battle with breast cancer.

had a lot of questions," Debora says. In a search for answers she called the Linda Buchan Centre at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre and met with the Breast Assessment Coordinator.

"She was absolutely wonderful. She listened to my concerns, explained the process I was about to embark on, and took me on a tour of the facility so that I could meet everyone. Words can't express how much that helped," Debora recalls.

A few months later, Debora underwent a lumpectomy and the next step in her journey was to begin chemotherapy treatment at Regional Cancer Care at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre.

"Every person on my care team was fantastic - from the reception staff to my oncologist - everyone was so caring and professional. They made sure to go that extra mile for me," she says. "As soon as I stepped foot in the building for my first treatment my fears disappeared. I knew they had a plan for me and that I was being taken care of. Even now - four years after my treatments - that great care continues."

Debora really appreciates the fact that the Linda Buchan Centre and Regional Cancer Care are located close to home. "I thank God every day that I live just minutes away from world-class cancer care," she says. Not only did she receive remarkable care, but being able to stay at home with

100% Northern

If you ever wondered if your donations to the Northern Cancer Fund really matter, ask someone like Debora Prokopich Buzzi.

It's because of your caring, your generosity, that she is here today to tell her story. Your donations:

- save lives - Debora's, and those of our mothers, daughters, sisters, aunts, nieces and friends.
- make cancer screening better, so the disease can be caught earlier when it is more treatable.
- improve cancer treatment so it is safer, more effective and happens sooner.
- give people like Debora services that see them through one of the most challenging times of their lives.
- increase awareness so fewer people will get cancer.
- support local cancer research that gives patients in our community leading-edge treatment options.
- stay in Northwestern Ontario to make Hope possible for the people of our community.

Your donation makes Hope possible. Please contribute today. Visit www.healthsciencesfoundation.ca or call 345-HOPE.

her husband and continue to work every day played a huge role in her recovery. "It was vital for me to keep busy during this difficult time. Cancer is a battle and it takes a lot from you, but I wasn't going to let it take my family and my job away from me."

Dealing with cancer doesn't end after treatment. There are residual challenges that carry over to the rest of your life. Fortunately, there are programs available that can help. Debora enrolled in a fitness program called 'We-Can' for cancer survivors run by the Health Sciences Centre that she found to be extremely helpful. "I used to experience a lot of fear in terms of what I could and could not

do. With the help of trained professionals I began to regain not only my strength but my confidence. For the first time since my diagnosis I felt as though I had my life back," she explains.

The Breast Cancer Support Group has been another helpful outlet for Debora. She has been a member since her journey began four years ago and has recently become a trained facilitator. Aside from the tremendous comfort and inspiration it provides, she loves that it helps her give back. As a group, the women lend a hand to numerous cancer fundraisers within the community.

Debora is grateful for everyone who

has ever donated in support of the Northern Cancer Fund of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation. Donations helped fund the programs, services and equipment that saved her life. From the Linda Buchan Centre, to the We-Can fitness program and the Breast Cancer Support Group, donations help in every aspect from screening, treatment, and recovery.

"Donations have had such a significant impact in my life and the lives of countless others. I am so grateful to live in a community that works together to make hope possible."

Dawn Powell on surviving cancer and helping others do the same

By Kim Latimer

Dawn Powell is an inspiring survivor for many reasons. She lost her father to lung cancer in 1978 and her mother to ovarian cancer in 1991. Years later, she herself was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer, bravely persevering through to recovery. She's now a survivor who is devoted to the improving the quality of life for others who are facing cancer.

"Since the loss of my parents, great strides have been made in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer," she explains. "I want to ensure that even more improvements are made to benefit cancer patients and families in our region. I am glad to be a voice at the table at Regional Cancer Care Northwest."

Dawn says her experiences with cancer motivated her to become a Patient Family Advisor for Regional Cancer Care Northwest at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre (TBRHSC). She now participates in high-level planning groups, and shares her perspective, offering a patient's point-of-view when it comes to important decision making.

"I've been through the cancer care program, I know how and where I can help," she says. She recalls when she was first diagnosed: "In the spring of 2007, I had increasing numbness in my right foot. My GP ordered an MRI to look for lower back or disc problems but at the time, I ended up having an MRI while I was in Toronto," she explains. "I had right hydronephrosis and right hydroureter and the following ultrasound

and CT confirmed a mass in my pelvis, so I had a colonoscopy."

In October 2007, Dawn was diagnosed with Stage III b Squamous Cell Anal Carcinoma - the same cancer that claimed Farrah Fawcett's life. It had spread to lymph nodes in her pelvis and groin, and was impinging on her ureter and S1 nerve which explained the numb foot. Her cancer is treated with chemotherapy and occasionally with surgery.

"I wanted the best treatment possible. Because SCAC is a rare cancer I thought I would have to stay in Toronto. I was happy to learn that I could have treatment in Thunder Bay," Dawn explains. "Although it took some time to make the connection between my numb foot and cancer, the time from diagnosis to treatment was only a couple of weeks. I am now over three years post treatment and consider myself a cancer survivor."

Since that time, Dawn has witnessed and participated in many of the advancements made at Regional Cancer Care Northwest. She is now an active member of the Regional Cancer Plan Taskforce Committee, helping contribute to the new 4-year regional cancer plan that will be released later this month.

"Dawn has devoted countless hours of her time to all of us at Regional Cancer Care Northwest," says Michael Power, Regional Vice President of Cancer Care Ontario, and Vice-President of Cancer and Diagnostic Services at TBRHSC. "She an extremely valued member of our team and we are so very grateful to have



Dawn Powell

her at the table."

Dawn's voice is being heard. "The good news is that more and more people are surviving cancer and we have excellent care, but even more can be done," Dawn says. "We need to diagnose cancer much earlier, we need to ensure patients have easy access to the support and educational material they need, and we need to customize treatment based on innovative, proven research so that people receive access to higher-quality, more personalized care. This is the future of cancer care."

"I have benefitted from the advances made in cancer diagnosis and treatment since I lost my parents," she says. "It's important to be a part of the future of Regional Cancer Care Northwest, and it is important that patients are part of the planning and decision making that will inform their future."

If you or a family member have experienced cancer, and are interested in becoming a Patient Family Advisor, phone TBRHSC to learn more: (807) 684-6020.

Board Profile—Jody Nesti

By Maryanne Matthews

The Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation is led by a dedicated group of volunteer community representatives. These devoted individuals have a significant and positive impact on the level of healthcare in our community. Jody Nesti is one of them.

Originally from Long Lake, Minnesota, Jody Nesti moved to Thunder Bay after marrying her husband, Lucien Nesti, in March of 1979. The couple now has two children who are all grown up and enjoying married life, leaving her to appreciate the role of busy grandma. "I am blessed to have two granddaughters Kaiya and Ania," she says. "And it's true what they say - just when you thought you have given your children all the love you have, grandchildren appear!"

Since moving to Thunder Bay, Jody has taken on an active and meaningful role in the community through volunteer work. Most notably, she has been a great supporter of the Bearskin Airlines Hope Classic for the past 15 successful years. "I have been fortunate to experience this event from many different perspectives," she explains. "First I was a participant in support of those with breast cancer. Five years later I participated as a cancer patient, and the years after as a grateful survivor."

Jody's support for breast cancer doesn't stop at Hope Classic. She is the Chair of the Thunder Bay Breast Cancer Support Group as well as being actively involved with the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation. Jody has been a member of the Board since April 2008 when the former Health Sciences Foundation amalgamated with the Northern Cancer Research Foundation and currently serves as Chair of Development. "Basically I have a lot of work to do, and a lot of people to inspire," Jody says of her role on the



Jody Nesti brings a valuable perspective along with a great sense of dedication to her role as Chair of Development.

Board.

Through her involvement with the Foundation, Jody witnessed first-hand some of the meaningful advances supported by the Foundation, such as the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute. As a cancer survivor, she knows just how important medical research is. "Research is what moves us forward," she says. "Everything we do at the Health Sciences Centre evolves from research, clinical trials, and studies."

Jody's experience with breast cancer has given her an even deeper appreciation for the care that is offered at the Health Sciences Centre and for all those who generously donate. "Donations keep families together by supporting world-class healthcare here in our community," she says. "The Foundation truly appreciates its donors, and we work hard to ensure that your funds achieve the greatest impact possible. We are always looking for ways to improve healthcare, and together we can do it."

Computer-based research will improve patient care

By Maegen Lavallee

Dr. Oleg Rubel has been asking himself one key question: "How can computer technologies contribute to the early detection of cancer and our future well-being?" He's been discovering the answer ever since. That question has driven him toward the development of a computational platform that assists in the design of detectors used for diagnostic or interventional medical imaging systems, used to find cancer. These systems are expected to be more "patient-friendly" and improve people's chance of survival, by offering a reduction of the radiation dose and new functionalities that will have the ability to detect cancer as early as possible.

However, as a scientist at Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute (TBRRI) since 2008, his research is a mystery to many because it delves into high level physics and mathematics. He is currently focused in the area of computational material science using mathematical modelling. He explains: "What I do is a combination of high-performance computing with advanced quantum physics models that enables us to foresee properties of materials that have not been created yet."

The evolution of Dr. Rubel's educational career is quite out of the ordinary. Initially obtaining a Masters Degree in Mechanical Engineering from Zaporizhzhia Technical University in Ukraine, he continued his education by earning a Ph.D. in Material Science. "As I got involved in engineering research, I began to gravitate more towards fundamental sciences"

Another sharp turn in his career came when moved to Marburg, Germany and provided theoretical support for state-of-

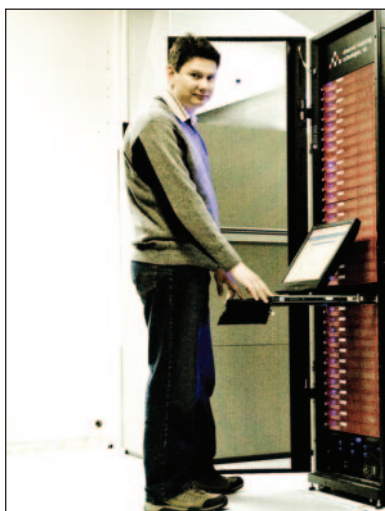
the-art nanotechnology projects at Philipps University. His research projects spanned a wide range, from advanced solar cells, used to convert the energy of light into electricity to semiconducting lasers used for advanced telecommunication systems.

The collaborative nature of these projects prepared him well for his current position at TBRRI. In fact, it was a joint partnership developed with TBRRI scientists and founders that lead to his eventual employment at TBRRI. He says he saw great potential in the research being conducted at TBRRI, especially the emphasis on fundamental research, and was eager to become part of the new development.

He is also very passionate about teaching and developing the educational opportunities in Thunder Bay. "A successful scientist is not only defined by their personal discoveries, it's extremely important to share our knowledge with youth," says Dr. Rubel, who is also an adjunct professor of physics at Lakehead University.

His research serves as a platform for training local and international students at the undergraduate and graduate level. He is enthusiastic about the future possibilities that arise from training highly qualified individuals. "Training students is an integral part of research and, therefore, is vital for the development of our organization; it creates jobs in our area and expands the knowledge-economy in Thunder Bay."

Another one of Dr. Rubel's objectives is to assist TBRRI in building a positive rapport with local high schools in order to expand interest in the educational opportunities available in Thunder Bay. An enthusiastic participant of TBRRI's local outreach events, he states; "The

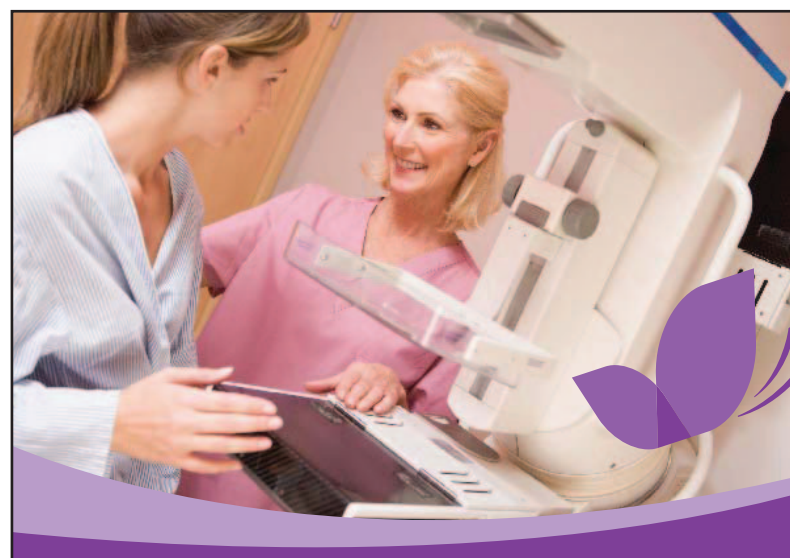


Dr. Oleg Rubel is a scientist at Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute.

scientists at TBRRI are continually impressed by the bright students we have here in our city, we would be proud to have many of them as our students."

He hopes to encourage teachers to reach out to TBRRI to increase awareness to students at the early high school level. "I believe that if we show students what's available to them at an early stage in their high school careers, they will be more likely to pursue their higher education locally when the time comes to select a post-secondary institution," says Dr. Rubel.

Dr. Rubel is optimistic about the overall strides TBRRI is making and what TBRRI has to offer, he credits the TBRRI's ongoing dedication to academics as the key to its success. "The future opportunities at both our facilities at TBRRI and our classrooms at LU are vast, and I am proud to play a role in this development."



Your Aunt, your Girlfriend, your Daughter.

Your donation helps us detect and treat cancers. Better outcomes happen at home.

April is cancer month. 100% of your donation stays in Northwestern Ontario.

Together, we make hope possible.



Northern Cancer Fund
Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation

TEL: 807-345-4673
FAX: 807-684-5802
TOLL FREE: 1-877-696-7223
www.healthsciencesfoundation.ca