

WI Cancer Wellness Centre offers close support



Debbie Magwood and Jill Boileau: A long-term dream come true.

by **Karen Abram**

BEACONSFIELD - West Island and off-island cancer sufferers looking for free advice and support can now find it closer to home.

When it opens, hopefully sometime in March, the Cancer Wellness Centre at 489 Beaconsfield Blvd., is the realization of everything that Debbie Magwood and Jill Boileau set out to achieve.

"This has been a growing dream of mine over the past 15 years," said Magwood, a St. Lazare resident. "I am a psychologist by training and I deal with a lot of cancer patients. It has touched my world in varying ways over the years. Back in April 2008 I began searching for a team and the first person who jumped on board was Jill Boileau."

For co-founder Boileau, the opportunity to start a non-profit organization from the ground up just felt right.

"I worked a long time in the corporate world and found it very empty and I had decided I wanted to do something else. When Debbie approached me, I knew this was what I wanted to do. All the family members I have lost, I have lost to cancer."

Everything they've encountered in the process has reinforced their belief in what they started, said Magwood. On January 26, the City of Beaconsfield announced a donation of \$20,000 to help finance the creation of the centre.

"Support from individuals has been outstanding. Jill found a webmaster who has donated their services. We have had calls from people asking how they can help. And now we are in a building because of the generosity of the people and the willingness and desire of this service.

"Friends and family get help from us questions like what type of foods can they eat, can I give them an aspirin; how can we help and what should we do," she continued. "The outside network of the patient, such as family, friends, neighbours and co-workers frequently are not offered the opportunity to learn how to help. They can come here and ask these questions.

There's support for kids going through treatments or have parents with cancer. "People ask us what should I tell my kids? How should I tell them?"

A big factor in the Centre's creation was the hassle of making one's way downtown, said Boileau.

"The services offered downtown are excellent [but] it's a trek...we want to offer services closer to home. We want to support the cancer patients in their own community, especially the outside network such as family

The Centre hopes to work in harmony with other services, such as Hope and Cope and NOVA W need its own volunteers, both women explained.

Magwood describes having just received a letter from a Tai Chi instructor with 25 years experience who would like to volunteer her services. "We will have a professional application on our website for those who would like to volunteer such as osteopaths, chiropractors, nurses, psychologists, and pharmacists. We've had an incredible support from the professional community."

To keep the application process equitable, everyone is asked to apply via the website. "Then we will have an interview process with each applicant because we want to match the dreams of the centre with the people. It's going to be a progressive program. We are hoping to officially open our doors sometime in March and will progress as we build up the services. All our services will be offered free of charge."

For more information on the services offered by the centre or for those interested in volunteering or making a donation as individuals, corporate or in honour of a loved one, visit the West Island Cancer Wellness Center website at

www.wicwc.org

<http://www.hudsongazette.com/>

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