

AYA NEWSLETTER

Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) Program Newsletter

November 2018

EMILY'S STORY

“My story is not unique. I hear the same story from so many other young women who have been diagnosed with cancer. The doctors told me I’m too young for cancer and since I don’t have any history of breast cancer in my family, the tumour in my breast must just be dense tissue.”

I was 27 and had just moved to Toronto to pursue my legal career and finally live with my husband. We were married the year before and living long-distance while I was in law school. On August 26, 2015, I had to put my career on hold to endure a year of treatments for triple positive, stage three breast cancer. I had five months of chemotherapy, a double mastectomy with immediate reconstruction, 25 radiation treatments, a year of Herceptin treatments, three other surgeries to fix my reconstruction and am currently doing hormone therapy for the next ten years.

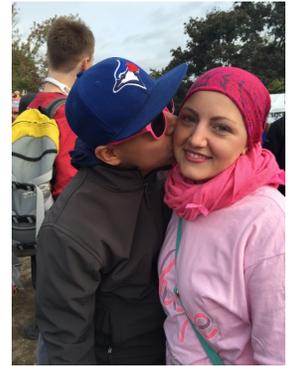
My story is not unique. I hear the same story from so many other young women who have been diagnosed with cancer. The doctors told me I’m too young for cancer and since I don’t have any history of breast cancer in my family, the tumour in my breast must just be dense tissue. It took several months to get my breast cancer diagnosis, after having to advocate for myself and insist on a biopsy. At the time of diagnosis, we knew it was already in my lymph nodes. Luckily it hadn’t travelled beyond that.

Exactly one month after my last radiation treatment, I started articling at a law firm. The hiring process for this had occurred the year before, so I had this position lined up before I was diagnosed. My doctors had advised me against starting a full-time stressful career so soon, but I was determined to be called to the Bar the following summer. It was tough to deal with incredible fatigue, chemo brain and many doctors’ appointments while working in a new profession. However, every week my brain fog would clear a little more and my stamina would improve. Mostly, it felt great to be using the skills I had worked so hard to develop over the last few years and to not be “just the sick patient” anymore.

A year later, I was called to the Bar, finally becoming a lawyer. Unfortunately, the firm I was working at was unable to hire any of their students that year, so I was back to job searching. In the meantime I secured a contract position at Rethink Breast Cancer, which has since turned into a full-time role. Pre-cancer, I chose a highly stressful and demanding profession because I thought it would be a stable industry and something I could excel at. Post-cancer, I realized that this lifestyle was not realistic for me. Exercising, eating healthy and getting enough sleep was so much more important to my mental and physical health.

Since getting the all-clear to resume regular activities from my doctors in July 2017, I have started a high intensity exercise program, ran two half marathons, started coaching running clinics at the Running Room and am volunteering with the Pink Pearl Foundation. **My work with both organizations has helped me find purpose in my awful diagnosis. If I can help a newly diagnosed women feel less alone or encourage someone to advocate for themselves, I know I’m doing something important.**

To follow along with my life after a breast cancer diagnosis, please follow me [@emilypiercell](#) or [read more of my personal blogs](#).



MONTHLY COMMUNITY UPDATES

GILDA'S CLUB

24 Cecil St. Toronto, ON
www.gildasclubtoronto.org
416 214 9898



20s to 30s Support Group

November 1, 8, 22
6:30—8 PM

This is a group for people from 18 to 39 who are living with or after a cancer diagnosis, welcoming those newly diagnosed or up to 5 years post-treatment. Some topics include: fear or recurrence, relationships, sex & sexuality and more.

WELLSPRING



4 Charles St E
Toronto, ON
www.wellspring.ca
416 961 1928

Visit online for upcoming program event dates this month: <http://bit.ly/2sGqCdy>

AYA PROGRAM UPDATES

NOV 22: AYA CANCER MEET-UPS

Our upcoming monthly AYA meet-ups will be taking place on **Thurs, Nov 22**. They will continue to take place every 4th Thursday of the month. Meet-ups take place from 6 to 7:30 PM on the 16th floor, Room 726 at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. We encourage participants to RSVP to aya@uhn.ca if they are planning to attend. Pizza will be provided. **Please note that the December meet-up is cancelled due to the holiday season.**



JANUARY 2019: MUSIC MEET-UP

Starting in January 2019, Dr. Chana Korenblum (Psychosocial Oncology) and Sarah Rose Black (Music Therapy) will be facilitating Music Meet-Up for AYA (Adolescents and Young Adults).

Music Meet-Up is a 6-session group program specifically offered to support young people with a cancer diagnosis. Each weekly session is centred on a specific theme and includes music-based activities and development of practical coping skills. Participants should be well enough and willing to attend all 6 weekly, 2 hour sessions. There is no fee for this program. *****NOTE:** No previous music experience is required. If you have questions about Music Meet-Up, feel free to contact **Chana Korenblum** (chana.korenblum@uhn.ca, or 416-946-4525).

SHARE YOUR STORY

Do you have a story to share? We are looking for young adult patients & survivors (ages 15 to 39) and their supporters (family, friends, colleagues) who would like to share their story for others to read on our website. If interested, please submit a story between 250 to 750 words, with at least one picture. You are welcome to include contact information (if you are open to having others contact you).

For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/2QuQpk6>

COMMUNITY EVENTS & UPDATES

YACC LOCALIFE TORONTO: CHRISTMAS MARKET

Young Adult Cancer Canada is heading to the Toronto Christmas Market (55 Mill Street) on **Saturday, November 24**. From 4 to 6 PM, it will be exploring the Christmas market, this being open to children of participants, where tickets are provided by YACC. From 6 to 8 PM, enjoy snacks at the market (YACC will pay for some appetizers but attendees must cover purchases of individual meals & drinks—we ask that this portion be for those 18+). To join or ask questions about the event, email

localifetoronto@youngadultcancer.ca

PINK PEARL FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

Pink Pearl Foundation is giving away one \$1,000 scholarship for college/university to a Canadian woman facing cancer. **Application intake is open until March 5th, with the recipient being notified on March 20, 2019.**

For more information on eligibility and how to apply, visit <http://bit.ly/2w2h68E>



BREAST CANCER FORUM

On **November 20**, Rethink Breast Cancer is bringing health-care professionals and patients together to discuss the communication barriers that exist in this relationship and our broader health-care system in the upcoming forum **Lost in Translation: Addressing Gaps in Communication** Between Cancer Patients and Health-Care Providers. Our Clinical Nurse Specialist, Laura Mitchell, will also be present as one of the panelists! Visit www.rethinkbreastcancer.com/forum for more info and to secure your ticket!