

# Cancer Prevention: *Take Action*

By Jake Cole

It's no secret: We all hope we don't get cancer. Yet consider this: On a typical day in the Ottawa region, 16 people will be told by their doctors they have cancer, according to the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation. In 2009, some 75,000 people will have died from cancer in Canada, with a predicted 171,000 new cases; and nearly half of all males and four in 10 females will get cancer in their lifetimes, with one in four of us dying from it (*Canadian Cancer Statistics 2009*, Canadian Cancer Society). Meanwhile, the search for the elusive cure for cancer continues without major breakthroughs, leaving those with cancer to face limited and often brutal treatment options.



Photo: Chad Harber

Not great odds you say? Can we do more than just hope? Yes, as a matter of fact. Cancer is not an inevitable disease, nor is it just bad luck. Scientific evidence indicates that up to two-thirds of cancers are preventable and this number, we're discovering, may actually exceed 80 per cent. So you can do a lot to improve your odds. Prevent Cancer Now (PCN) wants to show you how.

The thing is, most people do not make the connection between their environment — everything that we are exposed to, in the womb and after birth — and cancer. We'd

like to change that. PCN, an Ottawa-based organization with a national reach and bold plans, will be bringing to our community a powerful multi-media presentation campaign to be launched this spring. *Prevention — the Real Cancer Cure* will document the many preventable causes of cancer and highlight the changes needed at the personal, community, and national levels to reduce incidences of the disease or, in some cases, eliminate it altogether.

The presentation may surprise some. It may save lives. It will certainly challenge people to take charge of their health and

not just wait for disease to hit. It will be authoritative and fully researched, with credible data and powerful visuals to communicate that message.

PCN will recruit volunteer presenters from all ages and all walks of life — some of whom may have personal experience with cancer — and train them to deliver the presentation in an informative, credible, and inspirational manner. They will bring this life-saving message to public seminars at all kinds of venues in our Ottawa community, from workplace brown-bag lunches to town hall meetings.

PCN has secured support for the project from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. With that assistance and with help from others, we expect to launch our first presentations in Ottawa and Eastern Ontario in May 2010. Next year, we intend to expand the reach across the rest of Ontario and then the entire country.

Few here in Ottawa have not been touched by the massive human suffering associated with cancer. Ottawa resident Bob Brousseau witnessed his father die from cancer. "Watching my father slowly lose his battle raised the question that I always have had about this disease of cancer," says Brousseau. "Why do we spend so much money on curing cancer, instead of prevention? While I believe that research may help find a cure for cancer one day, prevention is how we can beat this dreaded disease right now."

Carole McCaskill from Fitzroy Harbour chronicles her fight with cancer in her book, *What Color is my Ribbon?* She tells how she "quit cancer" by changing her diet (to mostly whole, plant-based foods), her lifestyle (she sees a naturopath and receives Reiki), and her attitude (she talks about giving back to the planet and choosing to be more joyous and positive).

Like Bob and Carole, almost everyone has a cancer story to tell. We'd like to tell a much different one — about prevention. We want to wake people up to the fact that they can take concrete action now to dramatically reduce the risk of ever contracting cancer.

Watch for our public announcements providing dates and places for our free seminars taking place across the Ottawa region. Learn more about cancer and how to prevent it at [www.preventcancer.ca](http://www.preventcancer.ca). If you'd like to support or get involved with our project, we'd like to hear from you. **HWO**

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**PREVENT  
CANCER** **NOW**

## Why Prevention? We Do It for Love...

*Mary-Martha Hale and Don Desnoyers of Ottawa have been touched — no, hit — by cancer more than most of us. They believe prevention is the only answer and have decided to throw their support behind Prevent Cancer Now's fundraising efforts. Watch their progress on the PCN website [www.preventcancer.ca](http://www.preventcancer.ca). Click on the link to the Cancer Prevention Challenge. Here is Mary-Martha Hale's story:*

I lost my father, my sister, and my aunt to cancer. My niece underwent treatment for leukemia at the age of 15 and my sister-in-law is in treatment. Don's brother died of it, and his two sisters went through the brutality of cancer treatment, including surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. One of Don's sisters has since had a recurrence and is in palliative care, and his Dad was recently diagnosed. Of 18 immediate family members, we have had to watch six experience the horrors of cancer. We have mourned the deaths of four of them and prepare for the loss of another loved one.

Since 1988, Don and I have supported cancer research. In recent years, though, we have tired of the search for a cure. *We don't want to cure cancer anymore. We want to prevent it.*

As a young kinesiology graduate 30 years ago, I felt strongly that health promotion and disease prevention were the answer, but no one was very interested in prevention — then or now!

Thank you for starting Prevent Cancer Now. What can we do to help?

## Prevent Cancer NOW!

**What can you do right now to help prevent cancer in your life? Try these:**

- ▶ **Food:** Eat organic produce, especially fruits whose peels are eaten, and avoid red meat. Eat low on the food chain, choosing more fresh produce and grains and less meat.
- ▶ **Cleaning products:** Avoid using anything that carries a skull and crossbones. Use baking soda and vinegar instead.
- ▶ **Cellphones:** Limit your calls as much as possible or use a headset to lower direct microwave penetration to your brain.
- ▶ **Non-stick cookware and stain repellents:** Toss any old, cracked non-stick pans; the chemical perfluorooctanoic acid or PFOA, used to make the non-stick coating, has been linked to cancer. It is also present in stain-resistant clothing and waterproof fabrics. Rainproof gear is OK, but not next to the skin.
- ▶ **Personal care items:** Avoid anything that contains parabens — butylparaben, methylparaben — which in some studies have shown estrogenic activity and which have also been found in human breast tumours.
- ▶ **Open your eyes:** Speak up and act up! Demand safe jobs, safe kids, and a safe environment.