



Making life better
for Albertans facing cancer



Alberta Cancer
FOUNDATION

Patient Financial Assistance Program

IMAGINE THE EMOTION

that sets in when someone hears the words,
“**you have cancer.**”

Panic.

Fear.

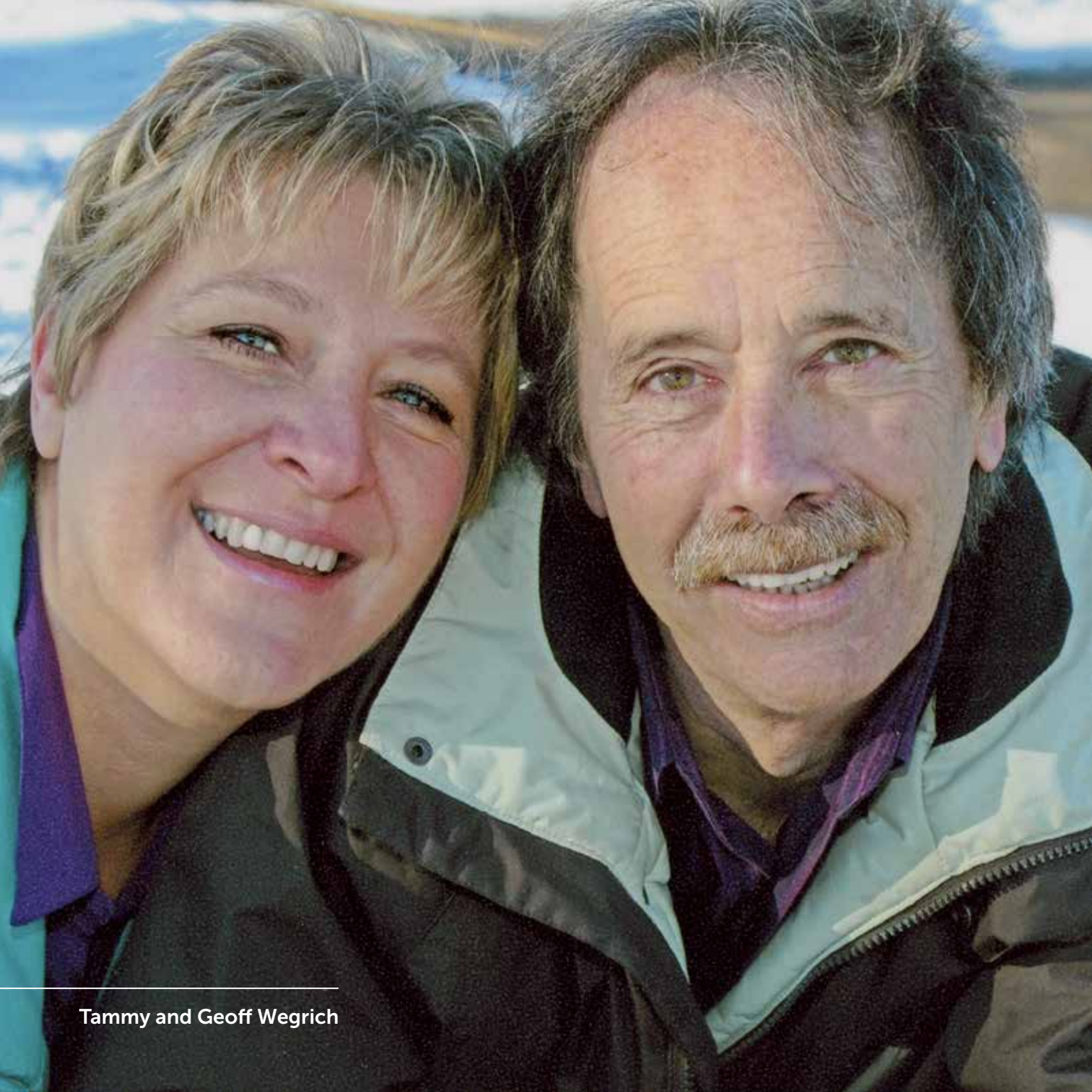
Worry.

Now, add in the financial burden that can accompany that diagnosis, on top of everyday expenses - travelling to appointments, medications, parking - all while a patient may no longer have a regular income.

Many people have to leave their jobs to receive treatment—some without any coverage to replace their income. The strain can be so overwhelming that some people decline treatment because they can't afford the extra travel or treatment costs.

For many Albertans, that stress is a reality. Cancer can be a huge strain on finances.

With your help, the Alberta Cancer Foundation Patient Financial Assistance Program is changing that. We have committed \$5 million over the next five years to ensure those who need financial support, receive it.



Tammy and Geoff Wegrich

Tammy and Geoff Wegrich were two of those Albertans who ran into unexpected costs following a cancer diagnosis.

A few years ago, Geoff was diagnosed with leukemia. Unbelievably, a short time later, Tammy faced a colon cancer diagnosis of her own.

Their doctors staggered their treatments, postponing Geoff's splenectomy so Tammy could go first, knowing how hard it would be to take care of each other. After Tammy finished her surgery and chemo, Geoff, who also had a triple-bypass open heart operation, went next with surgery and chemo of his own.

Not only did they both have to take time off work--Geoff from driving a City of Edmonton bus and Tammy from Sobeys--but they faced additional costs. Each trip to the Cross Cancer Institute was 85kms, parking four times each treatment week was not cheap and although their chemotherapy was covered, prescriptions to counter its side effects were not. A generic anti-nausea drug, which the couple had to refill to get through treatment, cost \$400.



Without any savings to fall back on, they quickly exhausted Tammy's RRSPs from her time at Sobeys.

As the financial and emotional toll of two cancer trials accumulated, "Life almost stopped, it seemed," says Geoff.

That's where you fit in. Thanks to our donors, the Alberta Cancer Foundation Patient Financial Assistance Program eased that journey for Tammy and Geoff.

While attending a class on living through chemotherapy treatments, they met Teresa Skarlicki, a social worker who helps administer the Alberta Cancer Foundation Patient Financial Assistance Program.

“I think everybody wishes they could shoulder the burden without asking for help, but I felt like it was more than we could deal with at the time,” says Tammy.

Teresa immediately started working with the Wegrichs to help. She says patients often find it more difficult to deal with the financial aspects of cancer treatment than the medical aspects.

“A little bit of help allows them to focus on getting through cancer — it takes all your internal resources to make it through treatment,” says Teresa.

How can you help?

The Alberta Cancer Foundation Patient Financial Assistance Program invests **almost \$1 million a year** to ease the financial burden as much as possible, and this number is expected to rise.

Patients can apply for support based on financial need for:

- mortgage payments or rent
- travel, accommodation and meal costs for those who cannot get treatment where they live
- anti-nausea and pain-killing medications not covered under drug plans
- costs associated with required stay in special hygienic apartments for those receiving bone marrow transplants in Calgary
- interim support for critical short-term needs, such as groceries
- other critical needs as determined by social workers

Stella Hernandez is another Albertan who heard the words, “you have cancer.”

After her body started experiencing strange symptoms—bruises on her legs, swollen gums and sties in both her eyes—she went for blood work.

The diagnosis was leukemia. “My world was collapsing in front of my eyes. They confirmed acute myeloid leukemia, the most aggressive and severe of all. Without treatment, my life expectancy was two months.”

Stella’s son put his engineering studies on hold to take care of his mother. After chemotherapy, she was told she would need a bone marrow transplant. Her brother in Colombia was a perfect match, so she used her savings to fly him to Alberta and soon would have to move from Edmonton to Calgary for three months for her transplant.

Her overarching concern through all of the treatment was recovery. But, always in the back of her mind was the worry of how she could possibly afford moving to a new city, with new accommodations, while not being able to bring in any income.





Stella Hernandez & Nicolas Diaz



Holly Minor

Thanks to social worker Holly Minor and Alberta Cancer Foundation donors, Stella was able to receive financial support during her treatment, reducing the stress on her body so she could concentrate on healing. Holly sees many patients whose lives are turned upside down following a cancer diagnosis. They can be in a state of absolute shock, trying to understand and absorb all the treatment information, she says. Some patients have to face being told they cannot go to work tomorrow.

The feelings of loss due to a cancer diagnosis simply multiply when finances are taken into account. "Everyone can benefit from having a road map and being helped along the way," says Holly.

"I want to thank you from deep inside my heart," says Stella. "I am now cancer free and will be forever grateful to the people who help others so enormously—what a reflection of love."

**Together, we can change lives.
All we need is you.**

**Thank you for making life better
for Albertans facing cancer.**



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Cancer Centres

Cross Cancer Institute, Edmonton
Tom Baker Cancer Centre, Calgary

Regional Cancer Centres

Central Alberta (Red Deer), Grande
Prairie, Jack Ady Cancer Centre
(Lethbridge), Margery E. Yuill Cancer
Centre, (Medicine Hat)

Community Cancer Centres

Barrhead, Bonnyville, Bow Valley,
Camrose, Drayton Valley, Drumheller,
High River, Hinton, Lloydminster,
Fort McMurray, Peace River

Thank you for
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that matter.

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