
MEDIA RELEASE

Better Together for Jacqueline

Sept. 15, 2016. On October 6th, from 6-8 pm, Portage College will be hosting the Better Together dinner to fundraise for Pre-Hospital Care employee, Jacqueline Lee-Martin. Lee-Martin, who was diagnosed with a rare brain tumor, underwent brain surgery and radiation and is currently on medical leave from the College. The dinner will take place at the Lac La Biche campus gymnasium. Cost will be \$10 a plate and you can choose to take out or eat in.

It began with a visit to Generations Eye Care in Lac La Biche with her daughter. She was having double vision but thought it was because she needed a new prescription for her glasses. She saw Dr. Muhammad Al-Bekai and he recognized a cranial nerve palsy that was caused by pressure on her midbrain. He referred her to an ophthalmologist at the University of Alberta, which led her to a neurologist.

“It happened so quickly from the initial visit with Muhammad. I’ve been thinking about him a lot and wanted to thank him for saving my life,” says Lee-Martin. “It was a subtle symptom but he recognized the seriousness of it.”

Papillary tumor of the pineal region make up 0.4% of brain tumors. Lee-Martin underwent a partial resection on June 14, 2016. She finished radiation last week and is now at her maximum dose of radiation. Doctors will keep checking every three months to see if the tumor grows back.

Lee-Martin’s prognosis remains uncertain given this rare type of cancer and the fact that it will reoccur. Response to treatment is unpredictable. Her prognosis is poorer due to only a partial resection of the tumor. The resolution of these symptoms also remains uncertain due to the invasive brain surgery and the damage to the brain tissue resulting from the radiation.

“I’ve been in health care for 20 plus years, and my experience as a patient was positive beyond what I’ve seen as a health care professional,” says Lee-Martin. “I saw the other side of it and all my interactions with doctors, nurses and all the technicians at the Cross Cancer [Institute] was fantastic. I’ve done seven weeks of radiation and it was a nice place to be. Such a positive, friendly, happy place. They worked hard for me and did their best to give me the best chance. So being in the profession, it gave me faith for our health care system.

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Lee-Martin thanks everyone for the support her and her family has received so far. “I’m totally overwhelmed. People are good. They’re very supportive and it’s been very uplifting. People have gone above and beyond and my heart is filled. It’s been such a positive experience because of all the support everyone has given.”

“We didn’t want to advertise and kept it in the family. When people started finding out, they wanted to help. It’s hard to take help. I didn’t want to burden or create drama, especially be the focus of drama. But it hasn’t been like that. It’s been very encouraging, comforting and helped lift me up. It wasn’t what I was fearful of. It’s been very positive.”

“We consider all our staff and students as family,” says Dr. Trent Keough, President & CEO of Portage College. “Creating an opportunity like this for people to help is a way for us to give back after Jacqueline has been such a caring, empathic and student focused colleague for so many years.”

All additional funds of the dinner will go directly to easing Lee-Martin’s expenses related to her recovery. To buy tickets or to help support, please contact Lac La Biche campus at 623-5551 (toll free: 1-866-623-5551) or email info@portagecollege.ca. All monetary donations will be accepted and we are accepting volunteers for the event. If you wish to volunteer, please contact Charmaine Jennings at 780-623-5591.