

Groups find ways to make contributions unique and meaningful

As our national network continues to expand, diverse groups that want to explore creative ways to assist NOCA often approach us. Whether they make financial contributions, provide a service or both, these volunteers and their gifts are of great value. They help further our ability to support women and their families living with ovarian cancer, educate the public and health professionals about this disease, and support research. In this issue of Seeds of Hope, we profile three groups that are helping us to fulfill our mandate: the Canadian ReDesigners Association, the Rug Hooking Guild of Nova Scotia and the Women's Educational Business Breakfast.

Creating havens for women with ovarian cancer

There's no place like home – and the Canadian ReDesigners Association (CRDA) has partnered with NOCA to ensure that women in treatment for ovarian cancer experience all the comfort and support their homes can provide.

CRDA members across Canada recently selected NOCA as their charity of choice, and decided to put their talents and skills to work by volunteering to create comfortable havens in the homes of women with this disease. The redesigners – who specialize in making a home the best it can be by using the homeowner's existing furniture, art and home accessories – will create a haven in a room selected by the woman.

"We surveyed our members and they saw this as a perfect fit. They agree that the haven project is the

best way we can help women with ovarian cancer," says CRDA /NOCA Committee Chair, Sharon Wood of Qualicum, BC. "Women often put the needs of their families first. We believe these havens will help women with ovarian cancer to focus on meeting their own needs during this difficult time in their lives."

Sharon's mother was diagnosed and treated for ovarian cancer in her early sixties. As a result, Sharon is keen to promote awareness of the signs and symptoms of the disease among Canadian women.

NOCA was recently the recipient of \$1,000 raised through a 50/50 draw at the CRDA's Annual Conference in Victoria in September. Through this and other fundraising events, CRDA members are incorporating NOCA's Turn UP the Volume! public awareness campaign theme in their publicity efforts.

While CRDA and NOCA were busy working out the details of the haven project, Sharon jumped at an opportunity to create the first haven for a woman in her area who is undergoing treatment for ovarian cancer. Crissa Constantine, a classical pianist, composer, recording artist and author bought a home in nearby Parksville in March of 2005. Within a few months, she was diagnosed with early stage III ovarian cancer and began treatment.

Crissa chose the music room for her haven. Prior to the redesign, the two women met to discuss how best to enhance the space to maximize comfort and well being, and allow Crissa to continue to play, compose and write during and after treatment. Considering all the senses, they talked about the importance of lighting,



Val Sharp, President of CRDA, pays \$20 for a "body length" of 50/50 tickets using Sharon Halpenny's tall body. Dana Smithers holds the tickets.



Crissa Constantine relaxes in her music room, which was redesigned by CRDA's Sharon Wood.

fresh flowers, down cushions and a cozy throw, placing of furniture to optimize the ocean view and incorporating a water feature to encourage restful moments. Soon afterwards, Crissa went out for a day while Sharon and her assistant got busy. Crissa arrived home to an elegant, warm and welcoming music room.

"Sharon transformed my music room into a very special place," says Crissa. "It is truly a haven for me to do what I need to do – focus on wellness and at the same time carry on with my passion, music. I feel so wonderful and supported."

"What more can one ask for?" says a delighted Sharon. "As interior redesigners, we are so lucky to be able to do this."

Women undergoing treatment for ovarian cancer and who are interested in having a haven created in a room of their home by a CRDA member should contact NOCA toll-free at 1-877-413-7970.

Rug hookers raise \$5,000 for NOCA

They came together from across Canada to Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, earlier this year to learn the fine points of rug hooking. And while they were there, the 150 students, teachers and committee members of the Rug Hooking Guild of Nova Scotia, which boasts a membership of 800 from coast to coast, honoured a friend and dug deep in their own pockets to provide support and education for women living with ovarian cancer.

Each year during their May rug hooking school, an auction is held to support a charitable cause. In 2003, the guild lost a member to ovarian cancer and the following year, several of the women viewed NOCA's Listen to the Whispers video. "Everybody thought it was so informative and moving," says Joan Bogle,

Director of the school for 2005. Joan joined forces with Gail MacKay, school Registrar, and Bernice Thompson, Treasurer, to promote an auction to raise funds for NOCA.

"We usually have an auction for a charity but we've never raised more than \$1,800," says Joan. "We were pleasantly surprised when we raised over \$5,000 for NOCA. Isn't that wonderful?"

Students and teachers attending the school were asked to bring items from home for the auction, which was run by guild member and auctioneer Joan Stephenson of Port Jolie, NS. "We even auctioned off some of the teachers' raincoats, which they usually bought back because it was a rainy day," laughs Joan. The leftover items were put into a silent auction the next day and everything went.

Then came the surprise call to NOCA, saying that a cheque for \$5,003 was on its way. "This is a fabulous example of how people can honour a friend and how a Listen to the Whispers session can help to motivate them to bring hope to women living with ovarian cancer," says Elisabeth Ross, NOCA Executive Director.

What a WEBB they have woven!

In their continuing role as ovarian cancer awareness advocates, the Women's Educational Business Breakfast (WEBB) has once again designated NOCA as the charity of choice for its 6th Annual Women in the New Century Conference, on March 4, 2006 in Stittsville, ON.

The conference is a day-long event which features 23 concurrent sessions on "nurturing" topics such as balancing work and family, learning a Latin dance and scrapbooking. The day also features a luncheon speaker, silent auction and a Street Theatre presentation.

A network for professional women in Ottawa's west end, WEBB has been a friend of NOCA from our beginning. After attending NOCA's first awareness presentation in Ottawa seven years ago, one of WEBB's founding members proposed our organization as a charity of choice. In the past seven years, WEBB has raised over \$50,000 for NOCA, and reached over 1,000 women with the ovarian cancer awareness message.

If you're planning to be in the Ottawa area in early March, consider attending WEBB's Women in the New Century Conference. Early birds can register by January 6, for \$55. Thereafter the price goes up to \$65...if you can get a ticket. The event sells out every year.

For more information, e-mail: witnc@sympatico.ca or call 613-786-1437.