



### **Peterborough woman breaks the silence on ovarian cancer with a personal story to offer hope to others**

When Marilyn Robinson was told she had ovarian cancer in 1976, she was 11 years old and one of the first people in Canada under the age of 21 to be diagnosed with the disease.

“There were no ultrasounds at the time and the doctors didn’t know what was wrong. They asked my parents if they were sure I wasn’t pregnant, which of course I wasn’t,” she says.

After many weeks and many mystifying doctors visits, it was only when Mrs. Robinson had exploratory surgery that she was diagnosed. “The doctors removed a tumour the size of a grapefruit from my left ovary,” she said.

What followed was an aggressive treatment regimen. Back then, this included 22 courses of radiation and two years of chemotherapy, during which Mrs. Robinson’s family travelled from their home in Peterborough, Ontario, to Toronto.



*June, 1978 when Marilyn was in Grade 8.  
Her hair and eyebrows were starting to grow back.*

“At that time, there was nowhere for families to stay, so my mom stayed in a terrible boarding house across the street from the hospital while I was getting treatment,” she says. “I can never imagine what they went through as parents.” Her family helped raise money to later open the first Ronald McDonald house in Toronto.

Beyond the hospital, however, Mrs. Robinson says ovarian cancer wasn’t talked about in her family or among her community. “It was something you kept private. You kept it quiet and you dealt with it. That’s the way it was.”

Now 41 years later, she is working to raise awareness as the Chair of the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope in Peterborough. “Up until recently when I learned more about the fatality rate of ovarian cancer, I didn’t know just how lucky I am,” Mrs. Robinson says. “I hope other women see my story as something to give them hope.”



*Marilyn Robinson, Chair of the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope*

In Canada, 2,800 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer every year, and 56% of those do not live five years past their diagnosis.

“I think there’s a lot of work to be done,” Mrs. Robinson says. “I always wonder when I see how much publicity breast cancer gets and how much support there is: What’s the difference? Just because breasts are on the outside of women’s bodies and we see them and they are sexualized? No one sees ovaries so no one talks about them. This disease doesn’t get the same support.”

While Ms. Robinson has long been an active volunteer in her community, she spoke out for the first time about her own experience with ovarian cancer only recently. “There were people I’d known for years who were quite surprised – they didn’t know this about me,” she said.



*September 2014 – Marilyn participating in the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope for the first time*

Through volunteer efforts and community involvement, Ms. Robinson has recruited more teams and raised more money for the Walk of Hope than ever before in Peterborough. This year’s goal is to raise \$25,000.

Since starting in 2002, the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope has raised more than \$23-million to provide support, raise awareness and fund research for ovarian cancer. This year the Walk will take place in 39 locations across Canada, including **Peterborough, Ontario, on September 10, 2017** at **Nicholls Oval Park**. For more information and to register, visit [ovariancancerwalkofhope.ca](http://ovariancancerwalkofhope.ca)