



Halifax Walk of Hope participants honour women with ovarian cancer

Like many 33 year olds, Nadia Hillier was working hard to build her career, spending time with friends and looking forward to one day having a family. When she was suddenly faced with a diagnosis of ovarian cancer, she felt overwhelmed and desperate to connect with other women her own age in similar circumstances.

“I was told I would never have children because I was late stage and needed to start chemotherapy and surgery immediately,” she says. “I was searching online for a way to connect with other women my age who had experienced the same thing.”

It was then that she came across the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope, a national event that takes place in more than 35 communities across the country, and directs all fundraising toward overcoming the disease. She signed up for the Walk in Halifax, although she had already begun chemotherapy and was having surgery the following month.

“My dad pushed me in a wheelchair because I wasn’t strong enough to walk then, after my treatment,” she says. “I was surrounded by my family and friends on Walk day. It was life changing – I felt so empowered.”



Nadia Hillier with her Walk team “Nad’s Teal Warriors” participating in the Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope in Halifax, NS, in September 2016.

Mrs. Hillier also heard about Elly Mayday, a Canadian model who was diagnosed with ovarian cancer at age 25 and became a vocal advocate for women with the disease. “Elly was the first person I met who

had a similar story to my own. She was really encouraging and she sent me a care package before my surgery with a few gifts and a note. It meant so much to me," she says. "It was encouraging to connect with someone who could understand what I was going through."

Mrs. Hillier has been involved as a Walk of Hope participant since her diagnosis in 2014. Over the past 16 years, the Walk has raised more than \$23-million to provide support and education, and to fund vital research into ovarian cancer.

"I have felt so supported and empowered with this team around me rallying for change and hope," she says. "It's a great chance to catch up with others in the community, meet new survivors, and unfortunately there are some also who have passed away from the previous year. But it's like we're holding the torch for them and keeping their memory alive."

This year Mrs. Hillier is feeling more positive than ever and is happy to be participating as a newlywed, with her husband, Jean-Francois Pelletier, by her side. "He's very supportive, and he'll be with me on Walk day again this year" she says. "I hope we can inspire other women to advocate for change."

In Canada, 2,800 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer every year. More than half of the women diagnosed are not expected to live past five years. The Ovarian Cancer Canada Walk of Hope brings people together to take positive action for women living with this disease. It will take place in Halifax at the waterfront, Salter Green on September 10. Register to take part or donate at ovariancancerwalkofhope.ca