

UpBeat: Arnie Vered on a Quest for Team Greggycare Cancer Champion Shares His Story and Helps Raise Funds for Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation

BY CAROLINE PHILLIPS, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN JUNE 13, 2013



Arnie Vered with his wife, Liz.

Photograph by: Caroline Phillips, The Ottawa Citizen

OTTAWA — You're not likely to hear Ottawa businessman and community leader Arnie Vered refer to himself as "a cancer survivor". It's a term he avoids using as he embarks on the biggest challenge of his life: beating a disease that claims an estimated 75,000 Canadians each year.

"I truly believe the word 'survivor' is not the right word; it just gives too much respect to cancer," Arnie said in an interview, one day after finishing his fourth round of chemotherapy for pancreatic cancer. "I'm going to be 'a champion of cancer'. When you're battling cancer, you beat the crap out of it."

The married father of six and president of Arnon Corporation learned on March 21 that he had the disease and would require at least four rounds of chemo - and perhaps as many as 12 - before doctors could shrink the cancer and then perform surgery. Due to the complexity of his case, he's had to go outside Ottawa for treatment. He's been travelling to Montreal, accompanied by his loving wife, Liz.

On June 16, Arnie will be among the 2,000-plus people participating in the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation's ULTIMATE RUN for Men's Cancers, raising money for local cancer care. He will be doing the 2km walk, but distances also include a 5km walk, and 5km, 10km or 15km timed runs.

Arnie is back for his second year as a member of the top fundraising team, Team Greggycubear. It was founded by the late Greg Hébert, a terminally ill cancer fighter and former CFRA News radio host who passed away Dec. 20. It was Greg's passion and devotion to the cause that inspired Arnie to first get involved. "He was just a true warrior," said Arnie. Greg's widow, Lauren, is now bravely carrying on as team captain. She's taken on this responsibility while also pregnant with their child, due sometime in June. "It's unfortunate Greg passed away before his son was born," said Lauren, but "knowing that a part of Greg will always be in him is comforting."

Team Greggycubear's goal is to enlist 100 team members and to raise \$100,000. The team's motivation and excitement remains as strong as ever, which is what Greg so much wanted. "It's hard because he's not here but everyone still feels his presence," said Lauren, who is determined to continue the Team Greggycubear movement for the long haul.

Arnie has proven to be the team's most powerful ally. He's quickly collected close to \$30,000 (and rising) from more than 100 friends and family members and has distinguished himself as the top individual fundraiser. The sum includes \$5,000 of his own money.

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"People tell me they wish they could give more but I tell them, 'What you give is more than enough because I have so many supporters. That is more meaningful to me'," said Arnie.

After he started chemo, Arnie began sending a group email to his support network of people to keep everyone in the loop on how he was doing. His list grew to include 300 names, which is not surprising considering his involvement in everything from the Telus Ottawa Community Board, Carleton University, United Way, Soloway JCC, The Royal Ottawa and the National Arts Centre.

More recently, Arnie has started a blog, The Chronicles of Arnia, detailing his journey of being a champion of cancer.

One thing is clear, Arnie is maintaining an excellent attitude. Helping him stay positive is the love and support he's been receiving from his family and friends. He does not want any negativity in his life.

"I don't want people to say, 'I'm sorry'," said Arnie. "I am happy with my inner strength and with the additional strength I receive from my family and friends. My wife, Liz, has been remarkable; she is my rock, and our six kids have been great."

"This year's Father's Day will be very meaningful to me. Walking together with my family in support of a great cause, the Ottawa Regional Cancer Foundation, and being supported by over 100 donors. How better to spend a morning on Father's Day."