



(This is a picture of Shannon and her family)

NGH nurses and staff rally behind one of their own diagnosed with cancer

January 26, 2021 – Many nurses spend so much time together at work with their co-workers they become a family. That is certainly the case for the staff working at the Medical, Surgical, and Obstetrics Unit on 3B at the Norfolk General Hospital (NGH).

"I'm so thankful to be part of this family," says Shannon Adams. "They rallied together for me at the lowest point of my life. They came together overnight and have overwhelmed me with love and support from day one, and it's ongoing. They have not wavered. Every day they are checking in on me."

42-year old Shannon Adams has been a registered nurse at NGH for over 18-years. The beloved nurse found out just before Christmas that she had been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer called acute plasma cell leukemia.

Shannon visited the NGH emergency department on December 17th after feeling quite ill. She thought she possibly had COVID-19, but after the ER staff did bloodwork, it revealed a high suspicion of leukemia.

Shannon was quickly admitted to NGH and was sent to the Juravinski Hospital in Hamilton two days later. While under their care, Shannon received a bone marrow biopsy which confirmed her diagnosis of cancer on December 22nd.

"That was literally the lowest point of my life when I found out I had cancer."

Shannon credits her NGH family for getting her to Juravinski as quickly as possible.

"I thank Jeanne O'Donnell and Dr. Sulikowski for keeping me in ER and investigating why I felt so awful. If they didn't, who knows what would have happened or how much sicker I would have gotten."

Nurses and NGH staff rally for Shannon

After learning the news of Shannon's diagnosis, a team of nurses and staff rallied. They brainstormed and thought of ways to help Shannon immediately.

In one night, the nurses fundraised almost \$5,000 and purchased gifts to help support Shannon and her family. Shannon says there are no words that can describe the feeling she got when she knew that so many of her friends, co-workers, and staff came together quickly to help her.

"When my husband showed up to the hospital with a bag of - I can't even tell you - there was just so much stuff in there - so many thoughtful things, so many thoughtful cards, gifts, cash, and gift cards. It was just like a tickle trunk. It was never-ending."

The nurses raised the money through their private Facebook group page. Other gifts included gas cards and an iPad so Shannon could facetime with her two girls aged 9 and 12.

Doctors, Nurses, Staff, and Friends donate blood in Shannon's name

The support for Shannon didn't stop there. Alexis Wynveen who works as an RN on the same floor as Shannon organized and set up four blood donor clinics in Shannon's name. According to the Canadian Blood Services, NGH employees came out in full support and not only filled their clinics but were able to meet 93 percent and 106 percent of their clinic quota in the first two clinics alone. As a result, hundreds of people will receive blood in Shannon's name. The nurses also set up a Canadian stem cell registry in honour of Shannon.

"It's just amazing to think that one blood donation can help four other people. I'm going to use someone's



stem cells. I am probably going to need someone's blood down the road. I am just so thankful that this is going to help so many people. I devoted my life to helping others, so this is really special."

NGH Nurse Melissa Frank (seen in the picture above) also created a t-shirt campaign with all proceeds going to support Shannon and her family.

"The support has been incredible. It's to the point where I cannot find the words anymore to describe what people have done for me. The messages, the calls, the thoughts, the prayers, it is unbelievable, and I am so blessed to be part of this NGH family."

Shannon's cousin and sister-in-law also wanted to help and started selling bracelets. The campaign has already sold over 1200.



(Rachel Henderson, RN at NGH)

The support for Shannon continues

The staff at NGH describe the 42-year old nurse as a well-loved employee. Shannon won the Dr. Julie Beaver Award in 2019. It honours the top nurse at NGH's labour and delivery/obstetrics unit.

Shannon is known to be hardworking, kind, and always willing to come in on her days off to help her co-workers if they are short on staff.

Shannon has already undergone two rounds of chemotherapy and will have four treatments in total. After that, she will begin the stem cell transplant treatment process.