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## A FRIEND IN NEED

NADIA LLOYD IS SELLING HER ART TO RAISE FUNDS FOR HER FRIEND KATIE MUNRO'S CANCER TREATMENT WHICH REQUIRES EXPERIMENTAL MEDICATIONS NOT COVERED BY OHIP /P3

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# MUNRO IS BATTLING TWO DIFFERENT CANCERS

## MEDICATIONS COST MORE THAN \$8,000 A MONTH

RAHUL GUPTA  
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After a close friend was diagnosed with two different cancers, Nadia Lloyd knew she had to do something.

A visual artist, designer and self-described Toronto obsessive, Lloyd draws upon the ever-expanding city skyline as a source of artistic inspiration. She's taken by local landmarks like the CN Tower and has been known to pull her car over to the side of the road just to paint it from a unique angle.

Now Lloyd has a different inspiration: selling her work to help support Katie Munro's experimental cancer treatment.

"I've known Katie for around five years, and she's a lovely human," said Lloyd, a Liberty Village resident, last Friday. "She had a job (as a daycare instructor), which she left to pursue a dream opportunity. Within three weeks, she was diagnosed with cancer."

Separate fundraising campaigns have been launched in Munro's name to contribute to her sizeable medical expenses, which aren't covered by OHIP, due to the rarity of the Liberty Village woman's condition. For treatment, Munro must rely on experimental medication shipped from the United States and costing thousands of dollars a month.

"When I tell people the details (about Katie's condition), they burst into tears," said Lloyd, who also became emotional. "She's trying to stay positive."

A breast-cancer survivor, Munro underwent a double mastectomy in 2014 and had surgery two years later to remove a cancerous mole.

This past June, after a lingering sore throat and the appearance of rashes on her body, Munro at first thought she had picked up a garden-variety malady from the daycare where she had worked. She was initially diagnosed with strep throat.

Given her medical history, Munro decided not to take any chances. She underwent a battery of tests at Sunnybrook



Above: Artist Nadia Lloyd (left) works on a painting as friend Katie Munro looks on. Left: Nadia holds up one of her paintings, which she is selling to help Katie pay for her expensive cancer treatment. FRONT PHOTO: Nadia hugs Katie, who is battling leukemia and lymphoma due to a rare gene mutation that makes her more susceptible to cancer.

Justin Greaves/Torstar

was diagnosed with leukemia, she received more bad news. Her doctors had also detected lymphoma.

"Oncologists say I'm one-of-a-kind," said Munro.

Being diagnosed with two different cancers had Munro's doctors unsure at first on how to proceed with treatment.

Chemo and radiation therapy were ruled out as options, given the presence of the gene mutation, which can inhibit such treatments. So Munro's medical team at Sunnybrook's Odette Cancer Centre consulted with colleagues at other institutions for another treatment plan.

They discovered the two trial drugs she is taking now - one a pill taken daily, the other admin-

Health Sciences Centre, and was on her way home when she received an urgent summons from the hospital.

"They wouldn't tell me over the phone (if I had cancer), just that I needed to return right away," Munro recalled.

Upon arriving back at Sunnybrook, Munro's worst fears were confirmed. An aggressive form of leukemia (acute myeloid leukemia) had been detected, requiring immediate hospitalization.

"I was beside myself. I was thinking, 'This can't be cancer

again. I was in remission and living my life, getting ready to start a new job," said Munro. She had left the daycare to pursue a career in teaching.

Exacerbating Munro's condition is a rare gene mutation, p53, in her family genetic history, making her more susceptible to different types of cancer.

Other Munro family members have been diagnosed with cancer, including sister Alexandra, currently in palliative care at a Texas facility.

Just two weeks after Munro

**THE ISSUE:**  
CANCER TREATMENT  
**LOCAL IMPACT:** KATIE  
MUNRO'S FRIENDS  
ARE FUNDRAISING TO PAY FOR  
HER EXPERIMENTAL CANCER  
TREATMENT, WHICH ISN'T  
COVERED BY OHIP

istered by IV once a month for five consecutive days. For the IV treatment, Munro has to be hospitalized.

Taking the medication has had serious side-effects, with Munro reporting bone pain and fatigue, among other impacts. But it appears to be working: large welts that appeared on her legs as a result of the cancer have notably reduced, she said.

In addition to the physical cost, the medication also has a heavy financial expense. A month's supply exceeds \$8,000, and none of the costs are covered by OHIP, which doesn't cover treatment considered experimental. Munro said she was meeting with the hospital to discuss potential avenues for funding, but she currently retains the responsibility of footing the entire bill for the treatment.

Munro can't even rely on employment benefits. She was diagnosed after she left the daycare and before she started her new job, and now she is not healthy enough to work.

Through a past GoFundMe campaign initiated by her former employer, as well as Lloyd's art sales, over \$20,000 has been raised. However, that amount covers only two months, and at this point she must be on the medications indefinitely.

Despite her condition, Munro remains positive, vowing to return to her normal life once she is in remission.

"Katie is such a strong woman, and I'm so lucky to call her my friend," said Lloyd.

## STORY BEHIND THE STORY

When reporter Rahul Gupta saw Nadia Lloyd's Facebook post about a painting she had sold to help pay for Katie Munro's cancer treatment, he wanted to learn more about Katie's rare condition and the community efforts to support her.