

COMMUNITY NEWS

People helping people: Comunale Cancer Foundation

By STEPHANIE KIST

AKRON — One of many hard truths about cancer is that it overruns all areas of a person’s life — not just their physical body and their health. Sometimes cancer invades their ability to pay their bills. Sometimes it robs them of the mental energy to plan meals and shop for groceries. Sometimes it erases birthdays, holidays and the first day of school from their radar. That’s where the Comunale Cancer Foundation reaches in to help. Now in its 20th year, the Comunale Cancer Foundation grew out of one prominent local family’s tragic loss.

In early 2006, Stephen Comunale Jr. died of stomach cancer at age 27. That same year, his grieving family and friends established the Stephen A. Comunale Jr. Family Cancer Foundation, intended to alleviate the many financial and emotional burdens of a cancer diagnosis. Early last year, the foundation expanded beyond Summit County to offer its services in Medina, Portage and Stark counties as well. Why? The answer is simple: “We saw the need,” said Executive Director Monica Comunale Stevens, Stephen Comunale Jr.’s aunt. “Unfortunately, the needs grow.” There are more cancer diag-

noses than ever, and therefore the number of cancer patients continues to increase, Stevens said. The foundation offers financial assistance in the form of individual grants, as well as free gas and grocery cards and METRO SCAT passes. Individual grant giving comprises the largest share of the foundation’s budget, but these funds are not used for medical expenses, Stevens said. These grants are meant to address basic needs such as rent and utilities. The foundation pays the bill directly, Stevens said. Clearly, the need continues to grow. In 2023, the foundation awarded \$295,000 in direct financial assistance. In 2024, \$300,000. In the first two quarters of 2025, the foundation already has awarded \$160,000, putting it on track to once again surpass the previous year’s numbers. May 2025 was the foundation’s busiest month ever in terms of grant applications received and funds awarded, according to Marketing and Engagement Manager Colleen Iacianci. The foundation is on track to reach \$5 million in community impact this year, Iacianci said.

Nearly all of the individuals and families assisted by the Comunale Foundation are referred by local hospitals and cancer centers, Stevens said, but anyone can fill out a grant application online. The foundation is designed to be nimble and react and respond rapidly. Often, grants are awarded within 48 hours of a referral. “If it’s all there, it’s very quick,” Stevens said. In addition to financial assistance, the foundation offers therapeutic services as well, including wig salons at Summa and Akron General locations, massage and Reiki services, a summer horse camp for children touched by cancer, a holiday meals delivery service, backpacks with school supplies for Akron Children’s cancer patients and a large art therapy program. In addition to providing grocery cards, snack bags for use during chemotherapy treatment and holiday meals, the foundation recently partnered with Stewart’s Caring Place in Copley to help establish a large food pantry. (For details, visit stewartscaringplace.org/cancer-support/food-pantry). Combatting even tempo-



Comunale Cancer Foundation volunteers pack bags for a recent holiday meal distribution, one of many services intended to alleviate the financial and emotional hardships resulting from a cancer diagnosis. Photo courtesy of the Comunale Cancer Foundation

Positive West Nile Virus - 2025

West Nile Virus was found in mosquitoes trapped by the BNMD and tests conducted by the Ohio Department of Health near the following area(s):

- The following areas are being targeted to further reduce the mosquito population.**
- Barberton Locations and Dates Trapped**
- Ward 1- Oakwood St. 7/11/25
- Ward 2- E. Tuscarawas Ext. 7/3/25, 7/11/25, 7/18/25, 7/23/25
- Ward 3- S. Van Buren Ave. 6/26/25, 6/27/25, 7/18/25
- Ward 4- Morgan St. 6/12/25, 6/27/25, 7/18/25, 7/23/25
- Ward 5- Hillsdale Ave. 7/11/25
- Ward 6- McCaferty Park 7/18/25, 7/23/25
- Norton Locations and Dates Trapped**
- Ward 1- Inas Dr. 7/18/25, 7/23/25
- Ward 2- Connect Rd. 7/18/25
- Ward 3- Golf Course Dr.- 7/11/25, 7/18/25, 7/23/25
- Ward 4- Johnson Rd. 6/25/25, 6/27/25, 7/11/25, 7/18/25

The primary way people get West Nile virus is through the bite of an infected mosquito. Most people who become infected with West Nile virus do not have any symptoms. About one in five people who become infected develop a fever with other symptoms such as headache, body aches, joint pains, vomiting, diarrhea, or rash. Less than 1 percent of infected people develop a serious neurologic illness, such as encephalitis or meningitis (inflammation of the brain or surrounding tissues). There are no medications to treat or vaccines to prevent West Nile virus infection. Learn more about mosquitoes and West Nile virus on the ODH website at www.odh.ohio.gov/wnv.

The Barberton Norton Mosquito Abatement District and the Center for Disease Control recommends the most effective way to avoid West Nile virus disease is to prevent mosquito bites. Be aware of the West Nile virus activity in your area and take action to protect yourself and your family.

- Use insect repellents when you go outdoors. Repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, and some oil of lemon eucalyptus and para-menthane-diol products provide longer-lasting protection. To optimize safety and effectiveness, repellents should be used according to the label instructions.
- When weather permits, wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks when outdoors. Mosquitoes may bite through thin clothing, so spraying clothes with repellent containing permethrin or another EPA-registered repellent will give extra protection. Don't apply repellents containing permethrin directly to skin. Do not spray repellent on the skin under your clothing.
- Take extra care during peak mosquito biting hours. Take extra care to use repellent and protective clothing from dusk to dawn or consider avoiding outdoor activities during these times.

Mosquito-Proof Your Home

- Install or repair screens on windows and doors to keep mosquitoes outside. Use your air conditioning, if you have it.
- Help reduce the number of mosquitoes around your home by emptying standing water from flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires, and birdbaths on a regular basis.

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MEET
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- FAIRLAWN — The First Friday Club of Akron will meet Sept. 5 at Our Lady of the Cedars, 507 S. Cleveland-Massillon Road, and will feature Bishop Edward Malesic, of the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland. The cost of the luncheon program is \$25. Doors open at 11 a.m.; the program begins at noon and ends promptly at 1 p.m. Reservations can be made by sending a check to the First Friday Club of Greater Akron, PO Box 13291, Fairlawn, OH 44334, by calling 330-535-7668 or at www.firstfridayclubofgreaterakron.org no later than Sept. 2.