

Kilpatrick family faces cancer diagnosis



By Chris Houston

On July 9, Bancroft-based journalist and educator Bill Kilpatrick received a lung cancer diagnosis. Four weeks later, a second cancer was identified. In an interview with Bancroft This Week, Bill and his family shared their emotional journey and expressed deep gratitude for the overwhelming support from the Bancroft community.

Bill's 15-year-old daughter, Brynn Kilpatrick, a student who also works at Stedmans Department Store, described her father's diagnosis as "overwhelming." She reflected on how the news has dramatically changed their lives, stating, "I want everything to be normal again." Brynn spoke of her desire to do her work and studies without constantly discussing Bill's diagnoses: "If I don't know you personally, don't bring it up. If I know you and I bring it up first, feel free to ask questions." Brynn emphasized a sentiment later echoed by Bill: "Our family is going the scientific way. We want chemo. We want to work with doctors. We don't want natural remedies, we don't want rocks."

"It affects me just like everyone else; it's horrible, horrible news. But you can't turn it back, so you just have to move forward," said Kendra Kilpatrick, Bill's wife. "Until we know the treatment plan, it's just chaotic," Bill is scheduled for a biopsy and colonoscopy to assess his lung and rectal cancers. "There's no point in speculating or guessing," Kendra said, acknowledging the unknown future.

As a teacher on summer break, Kendra is currently able to provide full-time support to Bill during his numerous medical appointments. She highlighted the local community's generous support, both emotional and financial, especially given that Bill, who is on leave from his part-time jobs, does not have workplace health insurance and is reliant on EI. Bill is a part-time reporter for Bancroft This Week and the Bancroft Times. He also facilitates anger management classes for the John Howard Society. While OHIP covers treatment and diagnostic tests, the costs of traveling to specialized healthcare facilities in Kingston and other cities have added financial strain.

"If someone gets a diagnosis, they know they can talk to him," Kendra said. She is proud of Bill for his openness about a disease that can be stigmatized and difficult to discuss. Bill has been sharing a video diary via his Facebook page every few days. The original title, "Our Journey with Cancer," was subtly pluralized on August 4 to "Our Journey with Cancers." During the video, Bill explained that the tumor in his lung is "most likely attached to the artery." Between coughs, he noted that chemotherapy is the likely next step prior to surgery. Bill tearfully shared the "curveball" discovery of cancerous lymph nodes in his rectum. "Things just went from awful to fucking awful," Bill broadcast. The video contained a link to a fundraiser at

www.gofundme.com/f/the-kilpatricks-fight-cancer. By August 12, the family's fundraising goal was 29 per cent met.

Bill has always been about helping people, Kendra told Bancroft This Week. Bill's career has spanned teaching, local politics, journalism, and support for people navigating the justice system. Bill is well known as a reporter and opinion columnist for The Bancroft Times and Bancroft This Week, and he teaches men about anger management as a John Howard Society worker.

It's a constant rollercoaster, Bill said as he held back tears, relaying how he had just gotten used to his lung cancer diagnosis before the rectal cancer was identified. It's life; we don't get to choose when we come in, and we don't get to choose when we leave, Bill said. It's okay to be scared. I go through phases where I am scared of dying.

If twenty years ago I knew this was gonna happen, would I have changed anything? Bill repeated a question he had pondered. No, is his answer. That is actually comforting, he said. When asked what he is most proud of during his 47 years on this planet, it's not his work nor his vocations that are first, but his parenting and his children. I grew up in an abusive home, Bill said as he spoke about his pride in interrupting the intergenerational cycles of abuse, and part of my promise to myself was that I'm not doing that. Bill is a proud parent to Joey and Brynn. That's the hardest walk all of us have to walk at some point. If you have kids, Bill said, not passing your own trauma and your own issues through them. He is proud of his parenting and dedicated a good chunk of my life to stopping men from continuing that abusive cycle. Bill has worked for the John Howard Society for thirteen years.

David Zilstra, the publisher of The Bancroft Times and Bancroft This Week, stated, We wish Bill the best and hope for his speedy recovery. Reporter Mike Riley told Bancroft This Week, I've known Bill as a colleague and friend for just a short time, but in that time, he has impressed me with his excellent writing, compelling editorials, intelligence, quick wit, and good humor. I wish him and his family all the best, and I know he's going to prevail against cancer. Hopefully, he'll be back writing for The Bancroft Times and Bancroft This Week, contributing more awesome stuff. Sending you positivity and healing thoughts, Bill...stay strong, my friend!?