

Candlelighters Simcoe Parents of Children with Cancer
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Candlelighters Simcoe School Support Program

What is Candlelighters Simcoe?

Candlelighters Simcoe was founded in 1990 by Barbara Johnson, a Pediatric Occupational Therapist in Barrie and herself the mother of a child with cancer.

Candlelighters Simcoe is a group of parents whose children have been diagnosed with cancer; some cured, some on treatment, and some who have lost their battle. It is dedicated to the provision of caring and compassionate support to parents, children and teens with cancer and their siblings at home in the community.

Families help families by providing parents with knowledge of library and other community resources, a quarterly newsletter, social events for the whole family and networking with other organizations. Telephone support and monthly support group meetings are available.

During support group meetings for parents an expressive art program is provided for children.

A School Support Program, school advisory services, family care packages, Christmas baskets and Mothers of Angels bereavement group are further Candlelighters initiatives.

A teen group meets monthly for social events. A weekly art therapy program serves children ages 5 - 12.

Candlelighters Simcoe is part of a national and provincial organization that serves families by providing information, engaging in advocacy and encouraging and assisting in the development of parent support groups. The provincial website is www.opacc.org

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What is the Candlelighters Simcoe School Support Program?

The School Support Program was developed by Candlelighters Simcoe to support children with cancer in the classroom.

It has been expanded and enhanced over the years. Since 2001 it includes Candlelighters Simcoe representation on SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) for the Simcoe County District School Board and the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board.

Educational resource kits, interactive school and classroom presentations, advisory support and advocacy are the highlights of the program.

What are School Resource Kits?

Together with the Childhood Cancer Foundation-Candlelighters Canada, Candlelighters Simcoe developed School Resource Kits. The kits include books for students and teachers, games and additional videos about children with cancer.

The kits are geared to the following age groups: 5 -7 years, 8- 10 years, 11- 13 years and 14+.

These resource kits are available through Candlelighters Simcoe for schools to use (on loan for about 3 weeks).

What role does the Interlink Nurse play?

In May 2008, a Pediatric Oncology Nurse was hired for the Simcoe County/Muskoka and Peterborough areas. The Interlink Nurse collaborates with Candlelighters Simcoe in the delivery of the school support program in Simcoe County and the Muskoka's.

What services does the School Support Program include?

1. PRESENTATIONS

- Presentations to students whose classmate has cancer (usually only at the Elementary level). This includes viewing the video "Why Charlie Brown Why", discussion about cancer, its treatment, side effects and emotions related to a diagnosis of cancer.
- Similar presentations to students whose classmate has a brother or sister with cancer.

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Presentations are not limited to one class but can be done for large groups of students by division: primary, junior and intermediate.

Presentations are also available for schools during fundraisers such as Terry Fox runs or for students learning about the science of the body in Grades 5 and 6.

2. MEETINGS

- Meetings with teachers, principals, special education consultants and school board personnel to share information about Candlelighters Simcoe; what it is like for a family going through the journey of childhood cancer; and how the school community can support families during the cancer process.

3. SUPPORT and RESOURCES

- Support for parents during IEP, IPRC and transition meetings with school principals, teachers, special education consultants, guidance counselors, therapists etc.

Candlelighters Simcoe helps to identify long term effects from cancer treatment that will affect educational outcomes by providing resources for the teachers. This is a step by step process that is available at diagnosis, during treatment, after treatment and long term. The needs of the siblings are also identified.

Candlelighters Simcoe helps to advocate for home instruction during the treatment process.

The needs of the siblings are also addressed.

At the high school level, Candlelighters Simcoe supports the parents at case conferences with the high school staff at diagnosis, during treatments and long term. Information is shared about Candlelighters Simcoe programs, resources for long term effects of cancer treatment and educational outcomes.

Should a child become palliative, support for the school is available during the last stages of illness and after a student dies.

4. REPRESENTATION and ADVOCACY

- Representation for Families of Children with Cancer on both the Public and Catholic School Board Special Education Advisory Committees