

Caledon resident keen to spread the word about Lyme Disease

Written By JULIA LLOYD

On July 27, St. James Church will host a presentation about Lyme Disease initiated by Lyme Ontario and a Caledon resident from 10 a.m. to 1p.m.

Special guest speaker Dr. Angela Lee, a Lyme Literate Licenced Naturopathic Doctor, will be focusing her presentation on Lyme disease and what the community members of Caledon should know about tick-borne co-infections.

“So this presentation all came about after the Caledon Enterprise wrote a story last year saying Public Health said there were no cases of Lyme Disease in Caledon,” said Janice Barry, one of the individuals behind the presentation. “Well I clearly got Lyme Disease in Caledon, so the article was misleading and I had to call and ask the reporter to change it.”

In 2015, a tick bit Janice Barry on the back of her leg while working a job in Caledon, and was tested positive for Lyme Disease.

“So I have heard of Lyme Disease, and remember seeing something about Avril Lavigne having it, but not thinking it was anything to worry about,” Barry said.

Once Barry found out that the tick carried Lyme Disease, she went to her family doctor in Woodbridge, however, her doctors didn't know much about it and put her on 21 days of doxycycline, put her in touch with a specialist who ran a ELISA-test to see Barry's blood work.

“My blood work came back negative and I thought I was fine,” she said.

In 2016, Barry started noticing symptoms but didn't put two and two together. She took her girls to Cuba (10 months after the initial bite) and as she was showering, she noticed another tick feeding off her.

“So, I went to my new doctor and took the tick and this time I had the bullseye rash, however, my doctor claimed there were no ticks in Cuba, so I was back where I started, not knowing I was living with Lyme Disease this whole time,” Barry explained.

Soon after Cuba, Barry started to get really sick. She tried telling her new doctor it could have to do with the tick, but he kept disagreeing. But the symptoms Barry had, she said, were not normal symptoms, she was fatigued all the time, lost a ton of weight and started to have issues with both her eyesight and speech.

Finally, Barry had had enough and went out and looked for an expert in Lyme Disease, eventually finding Dr. Angela Lee. She told Dr. Lee her story and was immediately given an IGeneX blood test, which is more accurate in diagnosis and is used mainly in the United States. The caveat? Barry had to pay out of pocket because the procedure is not covered by OHIP.

Barry was so sick at this point she couldn't even run her own business, the Seasonal Gardener, that she started on her own after managing her dad's market gardening business for 20 years in Bolton.

“On Dec. 20 on 2016, she called me. I was positive with Lyme Disease and I was also positive for another disease the tick carried called Babesiosis,” Barry said. “I started treatment in 2017 and it was honestly a crazy amount of pills.”

Barry said she has been trying to learn as much as she can about Lyme Disease and that is why she wrote a letter to Lyme Ontario, asking how they can help educate the Caledon residents on ticks and Lyme Disease. Barry claims Caledon is exposed, and many residents don't know about it.

Once the presentation was confirmed, Barry started putting up posters promoting the cause and she had one woman come up to her to tell Barry her story.

?I got an email from a mother asking, ?Do we have to RSVP to the event?' And I said no, and in her response she wrote me a story. Her son that's 12 years old is currently in the hospital with a rash and they think it's Lyme Disease. I asked her where she is from and she said in between Caledon and Schomberg.?

Barry is looking forward to hearing from Dr. Lee on the July 27 and hopes a lot of community members show up.

Dr. Lee said she discovered her interest of Lyme Disease nine years ago. She had just started her own practice when a patient with multi chronic health concerns visited her office with the diagnosis of Lyme. She admits she did not know much about the disease at the time, but her case was the turning point for Dr. Lee.

?Her story, like many others was steeped in controversy, loneliness and frustration. I decided to then further my practice and preceptor with physicians who specialized in tick borne infections, and now my practice is Lyme Disease and related infection focused,? Dr. Lee explained.

At the presentation, Dr. Lee said she will review the basics on Lyme Disease, symptoms, treatment, tick identification and prevention strategies.

?I have seen multiple patient cases in the area, such as Caledon where it is not considered a ?at risk area', but the disease is very present,? Dr. Lee said. ?Lyme Ontario will also be selling tick removal kits with all proceeds donated to Lyme disease related research.?