

Community donates over \$20,000 and new roof to area family battling brain cancer

By Sam Odrowski

The community has rallied together to support a father of three young children in Grand Valley, recently diagnosed with late-stage brain cancer.

George Raynard is unable to work as he undergoes chemotherapy, and since he's the sole provider for his family, a GoFundMe was started to help cover the cost of food and his mortgage. The online fundraiser has already raised over \$20,000 since it was created on April 30 with donations coming in from private donors, community groups, and local businesses.

George Raynard's sister Helen Cox started the fundraiser with her brother Thomas and mother Dawn Raynard.

Cox said George and his wife Ashley have been overwhelmed by the support they've received through the GoFundMe over the last two and a half weeks, and they are incredibly grateful.

"George is so overwhelmed. He's said, 'I just cannot believe that all these people are taking an interest in my family and trying to help us when I don't even know them,'" said Cox. "It's been incredible."

Since George was diagnosed with a brain tumour five years ago, the financial burden of being unable to work consistently and now having to stop entirely has become unmanageable.

"At first George was really just trying to do it on his own, and he is the sole provider for his family, so he was trying to work through this. Even when he was having seizures, and in and out of the hospital and, he just kept going to work, and he was just so focused on that," said Cox.

But with George unable to work and not as physically strong due to brain cancer, some home maintenance fell behind. His roof was leaking, but on May 11, All Pro Roofing agreed to replace it at no cost to the family.

All Pro Roofing owner Jamie Bates said with May being Brain Cancer Awareness Month and a local family needing a new roof, he felt compelled to use his resources to make it happen.

"Out of all people, we understand how important a roof over your head is," Bates noted. "With the considerable challenges the family is going through, we thought it was the right thing to do."

Gibson Building Supplies provided All Pro Roofing with some of the materials for the roof free of charge, and Green For Life (GFL) donated a disposal bin for the project, while the Circle K in Grand Valley brought refreshments and pizza to those replacing the roof.

"It's very important for the community to come together and do things like this," said Bates.

A new roof for George's family would have cost almost \$10,000 if they had to pay for it outright.

"If we can save that expense, then the family can contribute that money elsewhere, where it's more important," Bates noted.

Cox said George and his family have been blown away by the community's support. The Grand Valley Lions Club dropped off money, the Grand Valley Minor Soccer Club waived registration fees for George's daughters, Clover Farms in Grand Valley collected donations, and Project Linus donated handmade quilts.

Project Linus recently established a chapter in Dufferin County, and its members make quilts by hand and donate them to children undergoing crisis or difficult situations.

George was first diagnosed with a brain tumour in November of 2018 when his wife was four months pregnant with his youngest daughter, and he had an unexpected seizure at home.

The ambulance rushed him to the hospital, and after brain scans, the doctors said they wouldn't know if the tumour was dangerous unless they did an operation that required cutting into his skull. The doctors also mentioned they likely wouldn't be able to remove the entire tumour if they did operate, and additional treatment would be needed.

After careful consideration, the family and doctors decided it would be best to wait and monitor the tumour, as George's wife would soon be giving birth and in need of support.

However, he suffered a seizure that caused two dislocated shoulders, making George unable to work for six months. During that time, the family spent most of their savings as they had no income.

Over the next four years, the family spent lots of time together camping, fishing and hiking to create memories, as every day they get to spend together is a blessing due to the uncertainty of George's condition.

In July 2022, George had another seizure, and an MRI showed his brain tumour was changing. Doctors said it was time to do surgery to remove it and determine what was happening.

The family hoped the outcome of the surgery would be that the tumour was benign, but this, unfortunately, wasn't the case. After surgeons cut into his skull, resulting in 44 staples, they determined the tumour was cancerous, and they could not remove it entirely.

The Raynard family learned the tumour is Grade 3 Oligodendroglioma, which has low survival and high reinfection rates.

Six weeks of aggressive chemotherapy started in March of this year and has now switched to once a month.

George is receiving an MRI brain scan this weekend to see if the chemotherapy is working and determine his next steps.

Right now, George is weak and sick from the chemotherapy but maintains a positive attitude as he undergoes treatment, said Cox.

?He's just spending the time with his daughters and spending every minute that he can with them, making memories.? Cox explained. ?That's really what he's been doing for the past five years. He feels like he's been living on borrowed time, so he tries to make sure that every minute, every day, he does something special with them.?

George and his family live a minimalist lifestyle, focusing on nature and the environment.

?They're not a wasteful family. Every dollar they get is literally going to food and shelter, maybe going camping. That's all they do,? said Cox, who stressed the family's appreciation for all the support they've received.

?We just want to make sure that everybody in the community knows how thankful they are, how grateful he and Ashley are.?

To support George financially, visit the GoFundMe page at gofund.me/eb87c657.