

[Art for Cancer Foundation offers creative outlet for those affected by the disease](#)

By Lisa Rainford



Art for Cancer Foundation | Courtesy/DAVID ALLEN

Kelly Thorarinson and her husband had only been married for a year-and-a-half when he was diagnosed with cancer; three weeks earlier, they learned they were expecting.

Not even two years after her husband died from the illness, Thorarinson found out she had breast cancer. Just how did she cope with such devastating news in the midst of her grief, still fresh?

Thorarinson said she turned to art for solace, something she already did as a hobby.

A social worker at Princess Margaret Hospital suggested Thorarinson connect with Cid Palacio, founder of the Art for Cancer Foundation.

"I'm just so glad it exists," Thorarinson told The Villager. "It's a space where I can meet other people, where we can just be creative and paint. It's been a fantastic outlet for me."

Art for Cancer Foundation, a non-profit, volunteer-run charitable organization, strives to improve the quality of life for those living with cancer, 'by providing an outlet for creative expression through the arts.'

The foundation celebrated the grand opening of its permanent space, the AFC Place, on Davenport Road, just west of Symington Avenue, Thursday, July 16, with a ribbon cutting ceremony and guided tours. AFC Place is dedicated to providing free creative programs on a regular basis for people living with cancer.

The brainchild of Palacio, she established the charity after losing both her parents to cancer within 15 months of each other.

“I come from the corporate world, I worked in financial services. In 2007, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. She was given two months to live,” Palacio said. “The whole experience was just so extremely stressful. I took a leave of absence to care for my mom. She lived a year-and-a-half. The stress was unbelievable.”

In the midst of looking after her mother, Palacio recalled her five-year-old grandson asking, ‘Grandma, how do you draw a rose?’

Admitting she didn’t know, Palacio searched online for help and ended up ordering a painting kit for him. However, it wasn’t Spencer who painted, but Palacio herself.

“I’d get up at 4 a.m. and explore with acrylic,” she recalled. “I’d paint from 4 to 6 in the morning. I must have done 400 paintings. This is what kept me grounded, sane.”

The Art for Cancer Foundation is not about therapy, Palacio stressed.

“We’re therapeutic art,” she said.

In its early days, in 2011, the organization operated out of Art Works Art School, on Jane Street, north of Bloor Street West. For the first two years, Palacio and another board member ran all the workshops.

Since its inception, the workshops offered have grown from 11 to 72 last year. Princess Margaret Hospital carries Art for Cancer Foundation brochures in its library.

Entirely self-funded and volunteer-run, the organization relies on such fundraisers as the Scotiabank Marathon, this year taking place Oct. 15. It is seeking walkers and runners who would like to participate in support of the Art for Cancer Foundation.

“It’s hard to find someone who hasn’t been touched by cancer, who is either a cancer survivor, or is caring for a person with cancer or has lost someone to cancer,” Palacio said. “We tend to attract those living with cancer.”

Visit Art for Cancer Foundation at 1884 Davenport Rd. Email <mailto:contact@artforcancerfoundation.org> or log onto <http://www.artforcancerfoundation.org> for details.