

Kelly Reynaud, left, and her son Louis talk as they look over the new gardens at her Milton, Ga., home last month. On March 18, Kelly, 50, was diagnosed with type-3b ovarian cancer and in an effort to keep her spirits up and give her something to do while she undergoes chemo, her son rallied the community to help build a garden. (Phil Skinner/Atlanta Journal-Constitution/MCT)



Sowing The Seeds Of Hope

A Son Helps In His Mother's Fight Against Ovarian Cancer By Building A Special Garden

BY GRACIE BONDS STAPLES
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ATLANTA — Freshly planted beds of caladiums, hostas and irises and colorful ornaments have replaced the old worn-out ivy that used to welcome visitors to Kelly Reynaud's home.

There, along a fence and in metal pots, more flowers mark a path that leads to a shade garden and plots of vegetables and herbs the likes of which the 50-year-old mother of three hadn't seen since she dug up her last potato as a kid in her hometown near Hartford, Conn.

"In the past when I would drive up to the house, there was nothing there," she says to a visitor. "It was depressing. Now it's so welcoming."

Hers is not a community garden common to urban neighborhoods and open to the public. No, these nine or so plots are strictly for Reynaud's pleasure and, hopefully, her healing, scattered about her front lawn in pastoral Milton, Ga., where just weeks ago weeds and brush grew.

When her son Louis drove her home from the hospital last month, he had an idea to build her a garden. Then two of them. Then three. And then the idea itself blossomed.

Kelly Reynaud had just spent 10 grueling days at Northside Hospital, where she'd gone after experiencing difficulty breathing.

Doctors discovered she had ovarian cancer, and an outsize cyst was pressing against her diaphragm. They would have to operate to remove it along with her ovaries and uterus.

On the drive home, Reynaud began nam-

ing the different flowers she saw dancing along the route home: dandelions, irises, wisteria.

"She lit up," Louis Reynaud recalled. "It was the happiest I'd seen her in days."

And there it hit him. A garden might be the thing she needed to get her through the impending chemotherapy sessions, to encourage her to fight the good fight.

He penned an email to family and friends to bring them up to date on his mother's progress. It was an efficient way to communicate with lots of people at once without worrying about calling them or returning their calls. He mentioned the garden in passing.

Five minutes later, people started to respond.

"And it kept building and building," he said.

Before long, Louis said, nearly 80 people — some he knew, some he didn't — from as far away as Philadelphia had volunteered. Debby Herbenick, an Indiana University professor whom he was following on Twitter and who'd heard his story, sent peonies. The family's former landscaper offered advice and donated truckloads of topsoil and mulch. The National Ovarian Cancer Coalition donated teal wrist bands. His boss offered lunch for the crew on planting day.

"People I'd never met in my entire life were offering to help," he said. "They didn't know my mom. They didn't know anybody in my family."

But all Louis knew was he needed dirt, a shovel and some plants.

By the time the donations stopped rolling him, he'd counted 500 different plants and



PHIL SKINNER/ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/MCT

Kelly Reynaud, left, and her son Louis walk through their new gardens at her Milton, Ga., home. "It really lifted my heart," Kelly said of the garden. "People I didn't even know were coming up and talking to me. I was connected to these people and what I enjoyed was sitting back and watching them connecting to each other."

more varieties than he had names for. He set the planting day for May 12.

The first five volunteers arrived on schedule at 8 a.m. By 8:30, there were 15 and then 40. By the end of the day, more than 80 had come.

Kelly Mellott, a spokesperson for the Ovarian Cancer Coalition, was there in spirit.

"Louis' garden sparked a particular interest because he was a young man trying to do something for his mother going through treatment," Mellott said. "It was so moving and just such a creative, beautiful and touching idea that we just knew we needed to help."

According to the American Cancer Society, roughly 22,280 women will be diagnosed with ovarian cancer in the U.S. this year and about 15,500 women will die from the disease.

What makes it so insidious, Mellott said, is the subtle and vague symptoms, which are often misdiagnosed, giving ovarian cancer the reputation as the cancer that "whispers."

"Unfortunately, most cases are diagnosed in their later stages when the prognosis is poor," she said. "However, if diagnosed and treated early, when the cancer is confined to the ovary, the five-year survival rate (after diagnosis) is over 90 percent."

"That is why it is imperative that women, their families and their doctors are able to

recognize the early signs and symptoms of the disease."

Because Pap tests do not detect ovarian cancer, she said, the key to early diagnosis is awareness. And the key to awareness is knowing the subtle symptoms of ovarian cancer.

Kelly Reynaud said she had no symptoms. Then, on March 18, she couldn't breathe.

Two months later, she said, the cancer diagnosis is still a complete shock.

So, too, were the gardens, she said. "My husband was doing construction at the front of the property, so it didn't register that anything was going on," she said. "They didn't tell me until that morning when all those people started arriving and (family dog) Emma Sue was barking. I sat and cried for half an hour."

Reynaud said she grew up around gardens and for as long as she can remember, "I was always digging in dirt."

Now she will always remember the day her son made it all possible again.

"It really lifted my heart," she said. "People I didn't even know were coming up and talking to me. I was connected to these people and what I enjoyed was sitting back and watching them connecting to each other. There was such a bond. It was just overwhelming. The whole day was just incredible."

WARNING SIGNS

Ovarian cancer is difficult to detect, especially, in the early stages. These are some potential signs and symptoms:

- Bloating
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Trouble eating or feeling full quickly
- Feeling the need to urinate urgently or often
- Other symptoms of ovarian cancer can include:
 - Fatigue
 - Upset stomach or heartburn
 - Back pain
 - Pain during sex
 - Constipation or menstrual changes

Source: National Ovarian Cancer Coalition

Crofton Lawn And Garden Tour Slated Saturday

CROFTON, Neb. — The annual Tour of Lawns and Gardens in Crofton will be held this Saturday, June 16, running from 8 a.m.-1 p.m.

Hosted by the Crofton Senior Citizens as a fundraiser for the local senior center, the tour offers a collection of inspiring and creative landscapes around Crofton.

The Crofton Senior Center depends on several fundraisers

throughout the year to keep the facility successful. The members invite all gardening lovers to enjoy the work of fellow enthusiasts and also help keep the Senior Center open.

The fee for the tour includes a luncheon in the South Park. With the fee and registration at the Senior Center, a map booklet will give directions to the lawn and garden

sites. The Crofton City Transit bus will also be available to give a tour if desired. Door prizes will be handed out at that time.



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Semi-Homemade Recipes

For our upcoming July/ August HerVoice Magazine

Semi-homemade recipes should consist of ingredients where at least one ingredient is a boxed mix, canned or frozen ingredient.

Example: Lasagna Soup
This recipe starts with a box of Hamburger Helper Lasagna mix.

Example: Chicken Casserole
This recipes starts with a fresh chicken, cooked, fresh veggies, a can of cream soup and a box of macaroni & cheese.

Deadline: June 19th Watch to see if your recipe has been selected!

Send Recipes To: Press & Dakotan HerVoice Recipes
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