

## Sobering stats contrast with sunny daffodils

**Lexi Bainas**

The Citizen

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The Cowichan Valley, always a huge supporter of the fight to conquer cancer, has stepped up again with its usual enthusiasm for the annual daffodil campaign, organized by the Cowichan Unit of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Delivery of daffodils started promptly at 9 a.m. Tuesday, March 23 as dedicated volunteers picked up their big boxes of daffodils and prepared to head out to local businesses who had ordered the golden flowers.

"Cowichan business people are brilliant. They're so supportive of this campaign," said the Society's Ceri Newman, as she watched the distribution.

And she has reason to be proud.

This year, the Cowichan Unit has taken almost 75 per cent of the Vancouver Island order for cancer societies from Vantreight daffodil farms in Saanich.

"Most of the others are going to Victoria," she said.

April is cancer awareness month and the group always kicks it off with a bang towards the end of March here with a big daffodil luncheon, where the community gathers to enjoy a meal served by local members of the RCMP, in their dignified red serge uniforms. This event, held March 24, was sold out.

During April, Cowichan volunteers will be out in force because they know the facts: 62 per cent of Canadians who are diagnosed will survive their cancers these days, compared to only 33 per cent in the 1960s.

That's a statistic worth celebrating, but more work is needed, they say.

The Valley has an active and vibrant unit, with more than 120 volunteers who work year round to serve the community with such activities as: rides to treatment, financial aid where needed, one-on-one telephone peer support monthly cancer support groups, support of fundraising events, and offering information and support.

An office, staffed entirely by volunteers is open every weekday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Last year's April door-to-door campaign raised more than \$70,000 and most of the money raised goes to research and prevention, but more is needed to help cover diagnosis, according to the group's Gord Thomas.

On Vancouver Island, 210 women between 40-59 and 260 more between 60-79 were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009.

For men, prostate cancer is on the rise, with 102 men between 40-59 and 541 more between 60-79 diagnosed in 2009.



CREDIT: Lexi Bainas, Citizen

Adding the final few bundles of daffodils and his delivery list to the stacks of boxes in the trunk of his car, dedicated volunteer Al Posehn prepares to start a day of work for the Cowichan Unit of the Canadian Cancer Society Tuesday morning, part of the Society's annual daffodil delivery fundraiser.

Lung cancer, too, has been taking a severe toll on the Island, with a total of 620 cases diagnosed in 2009. Another form of the disease, colorectal cancer, is also affecting many people, with 610 cases diagnosed last year, according to figures Thomas has garnered from the BC Cancer Agency.

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