



■ **Left:** Members of Westridge Cancer Survivors Support Group.

■ **Right:** Pictured at the back, from left are Chantel Martin, Charmian Jacobs, Wilhemina Webb and Nur Allie. In front are Kevin Jacobs, James Smart, Peter John Kana and Saood Marks.



■ **Left:** Monica Waverley, 64, from The Leagues, had tongue cancer.

■ **Right:** Shiyaam Abrahams and her daughter Ameena, 23, who has cerebral palsy.



Cancer survivor thankful to support group

FOUZIA VAN DER FORT

A pensioner whose tongue cancer has been in remission for the past seven years, said she was incredibly grateful to the Westridge Support Group for helping her through her struggle.

Monica Waverley, 64, from The Leagues, said that the group “really supported” her when she was diagnosed in 2013.

Speaking to the Plainsman on Wednesday February 5, at Westridge swimming pool, she said her children and friends supported her by attending regular check-ups with her.

“It means a lot to me, not to have to sit alone,” she said.

It was in November 2012 that Ms Waverley noticed her tongue was sore but she was too scared to go to the doctor.

“I just took pain tablets all of the time. Eventually the pain affected my ear and that was when my son gave me money and told me to go to the doctor,” she said.

She went to a doctor in Town Centre and was immediately sent for a biopsy.

At this stage Ms Waverley could barely talk or eat.

“I got my results on February 14. I will never forget the date because it was the same day Oscar shot Reeva.

“I looked out the window and thought to myself. This is for me. Lord, I do accept this.

“I am not going to sit in a corner.” She was scheduled to have the tumour removed on April 12.

“I was wheeled into theatre at 8am and came out at 2pm.

“Everything went well. They had removed a part of my tongue.”

Surgeons had cut out the gland via her neck and while she was booked to see a speech therapist, her impairment was not too severe.

After surgery, Ms Waverley opted for radiation, as opposed to chemotherapy, which required her to return to surgery, where a plate was put into her mouth.

“I lay in bed with a feeding tube and a scorched mouth. It was so sore I really cried. It is only through the grace of God that I am still here.”

After the treatment Ms Waverley had to return for six-monthly check-ups, which then became annual visits to the oncologist and she was given the all in August last year.

Ms Waverley now encourages her family to go for regular medical check-ups and counts herself lucky that they were able to diagnose — and treat — her so soon.

“If I had to go later — dan sal ek sieke nie ‘n tong nou gehad het nie,” she said.

Ms Waverley said she read about the first support group meeting to be held at Westridge clinic, in the Plainsman.

“When you sit alone, you think about a lot of things. I just felt I had to be with people to share my journey.”

She said being part of a support group motivated her.

“You hear about all of the different types of cancer and what people go through.

“That is why I can really say — thank you Lord,” she said.

Ms Waverley said over the years she had met people, from different religions, cultures and backgrounds.

She is looking forward to attending Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSAs) Relay for Life in Mitchell’s Plain at Westridge High School from 6pm on Friday March 6 until 6am Saturday March 7.

At the event, teams of 10 to 15 people will spend up to 12 hours walking or running around a track, in celebration of cancer survivorship and its presence in communities.

“As long as I am with my cancer buddies, then I am quite fine,” she said.

For more information about the relay, call chairperson Saadiqa Abrahams on 061 494 1413 or email saadiqaabrahams04@gmail.com

Johanna Henry, facilitator of the Westridge Cancer Survivors’ Support Group, said their priority was supporting members in need and that members accompanied their friends on visits to the doctor and encouraged each other to stay positive.

“Yes, I have gone to a lot of funerals but you value the support of a friend and that you got to know the person before they died,” she said.

Ms Henry said facilitators must have the passion to help people and that in turn they help you to count your blessings.

The support group meets every Wednesday at 10am at Westridge library.

For more information call Ms Henry on 084 608 2320.



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