



Local artist Kimberly Rideout painting a mural. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Rideout

Local Artist To Paint Mural At Andy's House To Thank Community For Support During Cancer Treatment

By

[Maddie Binning](#)

April 30, 2021 10:37 am

Local mural artist Kimberly Rideout has been through nine months of hell with an out-of-the-blue cancer diagnosis, intensive chemo and a major surgery. Thousands of people from Muskoka and beyond have been socially distanced but by her side throughout the journey; now, Rideout wants to thank them with her paintbrush.

Rideout finished her last chemo treatment a few weeks ago, allowing her and her fiancé to move up to Bracebridge full time. They've been planning the move for years, but between COVID and Rideout's cancer diagnosis, they decided to stay at their house in Hamilton, just five minutes from Juravinski Cancer Centre and St Joseph's Hospital. Rideout underwent four rounds of chemo last fall before having a massive surgery to remove her entire esophagus and 90 per cent of her stomach in January. Her doctor compared it to the intensity of open heart surgery

https://muskoka411.com/local-artist-to-paint-mural-at-andys-house-to-thank-community-for-support-during-cancer-treatment/?fbclid=IwAR27Ej_zRqABAp6oodffcuShnvNBHn43hYPP_kb_-NoqTtwoI82aiG11b1s

multiplied by ten, and due to COVID limitations, she had to walk in for the surgery alone. Not too long after, she was back to chemo treatments.

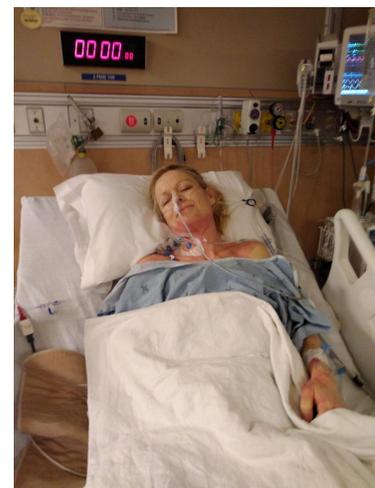
“The most painful obviously was the surgery, but chemo has its own side effects,” Rideout said. “Two weeks ago I was down to the weight I was in Grade 7.”

From perfect health to life-saving surgery

For the first week or so after her last chemo treatment, she could barely eat and spent around 22 hours a day sleeping. Every day she feels better and more energized, but the intensity of her illness and the necessary treatment remains a shock to Rideout and her loved ones because just a few years ago, she was the perfect picture of health, donating part of her liver to save her friend’s life.

“I had to go through a whole gamut of testing to be sure that I was a viable donor,” Rideout said. “When I did that, I was the walking epitome of health, so I had absolutely zero health issues.”

After the surgery, her doctors remarked that the condition of her liver was even better than they expected from the testing. They took the larger right lobe of her liver to save her friend’s life, leaving her with the left lobe and about 30 per cent of the organ remaining.



*Kimberly Rideout after donating part of her liver to a friend.
Photo courtesy of Kimberly Rideout*

Over time, both lobes grow back to the same size, creating two functional livers. Rideout had successfully helped her friend, and everything was fine with her own health until last summer when she started having trouble swallowing.

“It was just a very strange kind of feeling, like I have a lump in my throat,” she said. “Like if you ate a piece of steak and you took a chunk that you didn’t chew properly and it was sitting in your throat.”

One day, she took a sip of water and her fiance Paul noticed the face she made while struggling to swallow. He insisted she go to the doctor and get it checked out. Rideout made the appointment and, as most people do, she started to search her symptoms online.

The possibility of adenocarcinoma, a cancerous tumour, came up in her search results, but she figured there was no way it could be that given her fit lifestyle and the glowing test results from just a few years earlier. The doctor ultimately sent her for an endoscopy to see what was causing her symptoms.

“By the time I woke up from my endoscopy, the gastroenterologist that did the endoscopy basically had already called St. Joseph’s and booked an appointment for me with the surgeon

because they found a five-centimetre tumor at the junction of my esophagus and my stomach,” she said. “Two weeks later I went for the CT scan, and that tumor was already at seven centimetres.”

Facing cancer during COVID

Though her diagnosis was scary, Rideout felt blessed to still have their house in Hamilton, which gave her access to one of the best surgeons in the country for this particular cancer as well as two hospitals within minutes. She’s had the best possible medical care, but external stresses have played a big role throughout her health journey.

On top of representing herself in court while undergoing chemo, Rideout has been unable to work as an artist due to her cancer treatment and COVID limitations. Her fiancé has also been unable to work, in part because of the pandemic and in part because he’s been acting as Rideout’s caregiver throughout her treatment.

Kimberly Rideout during her last chemo treatment at Juravinski Cancer Centre. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Rideout



In addition to health-related costs, Rideout’s three children are attending post-secondary, so her friend Suzanne Witt-Foley decided to start [a fundraiser to help cover their expenses](#).

The donations have been a godsend and have kept them going at times, Rideout said, but along with that, the messages of encouragement and support have touched her deeply as she continues to share her health updates through Facebook.

“As my journeys progressed, the numbers have grown and grown and grown,” she said. “I literally have thousands and thousands and thousands of messages. Over 10,000 I would say, and I have people praying for me all over the world.”

Total strangers have donated money and sent their warm wishes to Rideout. There was even a friend of a friend in the Yukon without access to the internet that managed to make a poster, get in a canoe and take a picture to wish Rideout good luck.

Sharing a gift from God

The costs aren’t over for Rideout either as she still faces a \$6,000 dental bill due to chemo-related damage. Still, feeling grateful for the outpouring of support, she decided to do something she’s done many times in the past: donate a mural.

“I’ve struggled as a single mom of three over the years at times and I don’t have money in my bank account that I can go and donate and give money to different locations,” she said. “What I do have is a gift that God gave me that I can share.”

https://muskoka411.com/local-artist-to-paint-mural-at-andys-house-to-thank-community-for-support-during-cancer-treatment/?fbclid=IwAR27Ej_zRqABAp6oodffcuShnvNBHn43hYPP_kb_-NoqTtwoI82aiG11b1s

It's a gift she's shared many times, donating hundreds of murals to organizations like women's shelters, hospitals, hospice, daycares and more. She even filmed a pilot for a show called *Donating Dreamscapes*, where she gifts murals to non-profits and highlights the work of the recipients.



A donated mural Kimberly Rideout painted for Home Suite Hope in Oakville. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Rideout



A donated mural Kimberly Rideout painted for the Reach Out Centre for Kids in Burlington. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Rideout



A donated mural Kimberly Rideout painted for Onondaga Farms. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Rideout



A donated mural Kimberly Rideout painted for Onondaga Farms. Photo courtesy of Kimberly Rideout

“It’s priceless to be able to put a smile on somebody’s face like that and know that you make a difference in an atmosphere that’s going to be used day in and day out,” she said. “It’s a pretty amazing feeling.”

The show project has been put on pause, so for now, she’s using her artistic skills to thank the community that’s shown her so much love during her cancer treatment. She asked for recommendations from the community for where to gift the mural and received many suggestions for local non-profits that could benefit, but one in particular captured her attention.

New art for Andy’s House

Andy’s House is a residential hospice in Port Carling operated by Hospice Muskoka. [It opened in October 2020](#) after years of planning and community support. The facility is named in honour of OPP Constable Andy Potts, who died in a collision while responding to a service call in 2005.

Rideout was touched by the work that happens at Andy’s House as well as the story behind it, so she chose their facility for the donated piece of art. Sarah Hudson, clinical coordinator at Andy’s House, said the staff are thrilled to be receiving the mural, which represents the same kind of community love and support that inspired Andy’s House.

Andy’s House, a residential hospice in Port Carling. Photo courtesy of Bob Potts

“Truly, I think it motivates them to come to work every day to continue to provide that kind of care for our residents,” Hudson said. “My staff are truly exceptional, I can’t say enough about them. They were also extremely honoured and very excited to have a piece like that, to look at every day and inspire them as they continue.”

Because Andy’s House and Hospice Muskoka often use the monarch butterfly as a symbol and theme in their work, Hudson has asked Rideout to incorporate them in some way, but the rest of the mural is up to the artist. They look forward to seeing the final result and unveiling the facility’s new feature sometime this summer.

“We’re hoping to do a staff butterfly release in June some time, but then there’s also our virtual community butterfly release that will be done in August,” Hudson said. “Depending on what time the mural is done, we can line it up with either of the two, which would be really special as well.”

To donate to the fundraiser for Kimberly Rideout, click [here](#).