

Bay City team members support local hospital and cancer patients

As cancer patients arrive at the Karmanos Cancer Institute at McLaren Bay Region, they're greeted not only by a stellar medical team, but also by a colorful rock garden of hope. Many local artists have contributed to the garden over the years including talented Meijer team member, Meagan LaPlant.

Inspired by her husband Matthew's battle with pancreatic cancer, Meagan began painting uplifting messages on rocks and placing them outside the cancer center's entrance. The vibrant garden display offers a moment of motivation to those walking in for treatment, including Meagan and Matthew themselves.

"If we can spread some hope and let people know they are not alone in the fight against cancer, it's worth it," Meagan said. "I just want to encourage my husband and anyone with cancer to keep going, keep fighting."

Her mission has now bloomed beyond her family.

For Matthew and Meagan LaPlant, the Meijer on Wilder Road has been more than just a workplace—it's where their story began nearly 30 years ago, when Matthew made pizzas and Meagan decorated cakes in the bakery. Joined by their daughter Alex, who also works at the same Meijer, Matthew and Meagan recently gathered in the Meijer Team Center to paint inspirational rocks with their friends and colleagues. These small but mighty artistic tokens can become powerful symbols of hope to those impacted by cancer, and reminders for others to try and catch cancer early, before it spreads.

Painting rocks became a therapeutic outlet for Meagan after Matthew's diagnosis. Spurred on by the support of Scott Marazita, the store director, Meagan helped organize a rock painting party for her colleagues. The team-building activity will continue this fall, with art supplies and blank rocks available in the Meijer Team Room for staff to decorate during breaks or lunch hours if they choose.

Once the Meijer team finishes painting the rocks, the LaPlant family will deliver them to the garden outside the Karmanos Cancer Institute at McLaren Bay Region. They hope the positive messages will bring sparks of courage and optimism to others as they go into the building for treatment, or that the rocks can become keepsakes of encouragement for other people facing cancer.

"We are so grateful to the Meijer team for taking the time to create this meaningful show of support for the friends, neighbors and loved ones of those receiving treatment at the Karmanos Cancer Institute," said Nancy King, Regional Director McLaren Bay Region Karmanos Cancer Institute. "When undergoing cancer treatment, the smallest gestures provide the biggest wins for our patients. Just knowing others care and understand what a challenging time this is means the world to them. Kindness always wins, and Meijer has demonstrated this in a very big way."

Additional assets available online:  [Photos](#) ⁽⁴⁾

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