



# Annual Report

May 1, 2018 – April 30, 2019

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## Letter from our Founder

Dear Pink Pearl Community Members,

I am pleased to present you with Pink Pearl Canada's 2018/2019 Annual Report.

Over the course of the year and since the end of fiscal 2019, we have taken steps to creating a sustainable future for Pink Pearl. I have been appointed the organization's Executive Director and am pleased to announce Amanda Marshall (Partner, KPMG) as the new Chair of our Board of Directors. We also are thrilled to have Nicole Le Dressay (Senior Manager, KPMG) as our newest board member and Melaina Gasbarrino continuing as our Programs & Communications Manager. We have a strong team in place as we expand our programs across Canada over the next two years.

On the program side, we have supported over 2,000 women to date and have been running our signature retreats for six years. This year we introduced our new Learning Series where we invite young women to come together over a meal to learn about a topic of interest. Further, as mentioned in last year's note, we have officially launched our Ambassador Program where we invite program participants to volunteer with Pink Pearl. We continue to innovate and partner with other community-based organizations and have some exciting new initiatives underway for 2019/2020 {and 2020/2021} including plans for retreats in Kingston, Calgary, Halifax and Vancouver.

Our 2019 Black & White with a Touch of Pink fundraising event took place at Love Child Social House in Toronto. Once again, the evening was a tremendous success, raising over \$45,000 to fuel our programs, bringing our cumulative funds raised from Black & White events to nearly \$550,000 over the last 13 years ago.

The growth and success of Pink Pearl would not be possible without its dedicated volunteers. We recognized Stephanie LaFratta for the hard work and dedication she brings to her role on the program team. Stephanie has been volunteering with Pink Pearl since our first Black and White over 13 years go. We are very fortunate to have her as part of our team.

I am grateful for the year we have had, and look forward to working together to make a difference in the lives of young women with cancer. Thank you for your continued support of Pink Pearl.

All my best,

Elise Gasbarrino  
Founder & Executive Director  
Pink Pearl Canada



## OUR STORY

Pink Pearl Canada was conceived by ovarian cancer survivor Elise Gasbarrino. While undergoing cancer treatment at 21 years old, Elise felt certain elements were missing from her experience—a way to connect with women her age facing the same issues, and a means for them to conquer their issues together. Her vision transformed into Pink Pearl Canada.

## OUR CAUSE

Pink Pearl Canada is a registered charitable organization that provides support, facilitates connections and empowers young women who are courageously overcoming the social and emotional challenges of being diagnosed with cancer across southern Ontario. Pink Pearl has successfully raised more than \$550,000 to date through reputable initiatives, such as *Black & White with a Touch of Pink*, our annual fundraising event, and *One Fine Day*, our fundraising and awareness-raising initiative. Funds raised provide effective and fully-funded programming for young women facing cancer of any type.

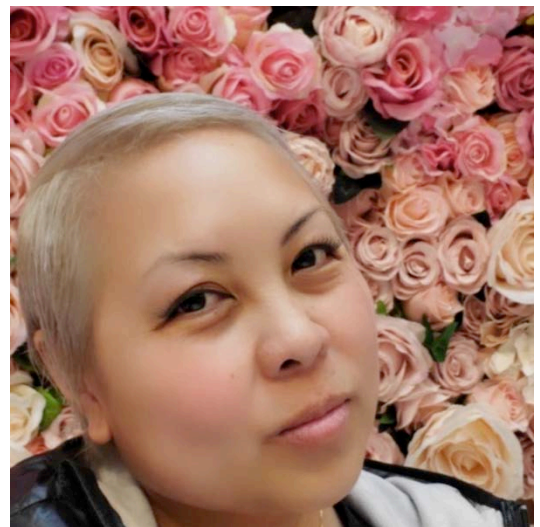
## OUR VALUES

Peer support enables us to connect with other young women to face the mental and emotional challenges of cancer together.

Knowledge to empower decision-making throughout the cancer experience.

Taking the time for reflection and self-care.

Everyone has a story, and cancer is only one chapter.



"To be around inspiration and aspiration made my heart full. There are good people out there, and they are the ones who created Pink Pearl."

Maja,  
Program Participant

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



### *Amanda Marshall, Chair of the Board*

Amanda Marshall joined Pink Pearl in 2015 to oversee the finance and tax function of the organization. She is a Partner at KPMG LLP where she leads the tax due diligence and structuring elements of transactions. Amanda holds a degree in Business Administration from Wilfrid Laurier University and a CPA, CA designation. She also serves on the board of directors of Melanie's Way, a non-profit organization providing customized experiences to young women facing metastatic cancer.



### *Laura Mitchell, Medical*

Laura Mitchell is a Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Adolescent and Young Adult Program at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre and was one of the leaders in the development and launch of the program in 2014. Laura is also an Adjunct Lecturer in the Lawrence S Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing; University of Toronto. Laura is active in AYA initiatives locally, nationally and internationally and has been the co-author of several AYA publications. Laura is looking forward to working more closely with the AYA community partners and is honoured to be a member of the Pink Pearl board.



### *Nicole Almond, Strategy*

Nicole Almond joined Pink Pearl's board in the fall of 2017. Nicole brings her knowledge of the non-profit sector with a decade of experience at Enactus Canada, a national charity focused on youth leadership development, including five years as its President. Nicole has been involved in other charitable causes and organizations, including serving as the Chair of Ovarian Cancer Canada's walk of Hope in Toronto. Nicole holds a Bachelors of Business Administration from Wilfrid Laurier University.



### *Rena McDonald, Finance*

Rena McDonald holds a CPA/CMA accounting designation. She is currently on the Board for the Hotel Dieu Charitable Foundation and served previously as the Treasurer and Board member of the Niagara Community Foundation. Also, Rena was a member of the Hotel Financial & Technology Professionals board of directors, a former member of the Ministry of Tourism Policy Advisory Council and the Financial Advisory Council of Holy Rosary Church in Thorold.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



*George Gasbarrino, People*

For over 30 years George has been in Human Resources Management where he led various companies in different sectors (process & assembly manufacturing, services lodging & food services across Northern communities in Canada, Alaska, and the Gulf of Mexico). The most recent of his roles as the Labour Relations Officer with the Police Services Organization. George has been apart of BOD's for various charities; George Jeffery Children Centre, local United Way Chapters and most recently Pink Pearl and has organized employee events for United Way, the Shelter House and Habitat Home builds.



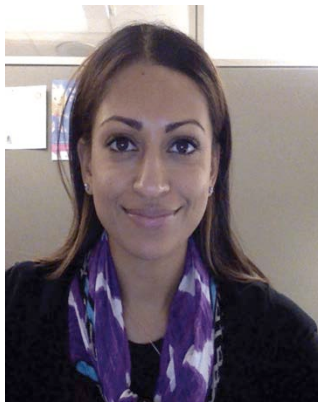
*Vittoria Varalli, Strategy*

Vittoria has been with Pink Pearl since its inception. Vittoria is the VP of Sustainability at Sobeys. She holds a BBA from Wilfrid Laurier University and a JD from Osgoode Hall Law School. She is a member of the New York State bar.



*Nicole Le Dressay, Finance*

Nicole is a Senior Manager in the M&A Tax practice at KPMG LLP. Nicole holds a degree in Business Administration from the University of Toronto and a CPA, CA designation. Nicole joined Pink Pearl in 2017 to assist Amanda Marshall with the day-to-day finance and tax function of the organization.



*Dr. Punam Rana, Medical*

Dr. Punam Rana is a medical oncologist working at Humber River Hospital. She completed her medical oncologist training at University of Toronto and completed a fellowship at McMaster University where she participated in research related to the Adolescent and Young Adult (AYA) population. Punam has a special interest in the AYA population and improving the quality of life of these patients.



## OUR PROGRAMS

Our programs are developed using experience-based design, taking into consideration the needs of young women between 18-40 years, and building effective programming to fulfill those needs, at no cost to the participants.

**Retreats** encourage our program participants to connect, self-reflect, and share experiences in a safe and peer-supported environment

**Local Socials** provide a relaxed environment for young women with cancer to connect and to learn more about our support-based programs

**Learning Series** invite young women with cancer to come together to learn about a topic of interest over brunch or dinner

**Pink Pearl Support Packages** contain helpful resources, guided questions, and a symbolic bracelet of hope for young women newly diagnosed with cancer in participating hospitals and wellness centres across Canada

**Post-Secondary Scholarship** is awarded to a young woman with cancer who is involved in her community and attending a post-secondary institution

**Ambassador Program** invites our program participants to facilitate Local Socials and lend a listening ear to young women facing cancer

**Private Facebook Group** provides an online community of support for young women with cancer to share and learn together

"I had an excellent first retreat. I'm already looking forward to the next one to build on the friendships I've made this weekend!"

*March 2018 Retreat Participant*



## LISA'S STORY

In 2017, at the age of 35, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Leading up to this, my husband and I had been trying to get pregnant for a while, with no success. We had been together for a long time, but always felt like we were too young to have a baby, and that it would just happen when we were older – and ready. But when we were finally ready, it didn't. And I was stuck watching everyone in my life get pregnant with ease, or by accident, and it was heartbreaking. Then I was diagnosed with cancer, and not just any cancer – but a cancer that would take away my fertility AND my chance of ever carrying a child. I was completely devastated. And angry. And resentful. And it felt like no one fully understood – even my husband. I felt so alone.

Right from the time of my diagnosis, I wanted to connect with other cancer survivors. My best friend had had cancer a year and a half before me, and I felt so grateful to have her by my side because she really understood the paralyzing fear of hearing those dreaded words: "You have cancer." We already had so much in common, and now we had this too. It only strengthened our lifelong bond. But our cancer stories were very different, and I yearned to connect with other young women who understood what I was going through. I was about to go into menopause at 35 and I was losing my fertility. I was getting ready to lose my hair. I was scared shitless and needed to find people that understood all that stuff and could tell me I was going to be okay!

At the same time, a friend of mine connected me with one of her other friends who had a very similar cancer experience, and we hit it off immediately. She became a cancer guru of sorts, guiding me through menopause, chemo and rads. We cried about the babies we might never have. We laughed about the cruel gifts of menopause. She lent me wings. She told me everything that was about to happen before it did and it helped me to prepare. She was about a year ahead of me in the journey and she was healthy, positive and happy and she became my inspiration – "That's going to be me next year" I would tell myself.

I needed to meet more people like her. I found a support group for 20- and 30-something's with cancer but I had anxiety about going every week. I went to an ovarian cancer support group once, but I was the youngest person by about 15 years and just couldn't relate to anyone. It wasn't until I finished chemo and rads that a social worker told me about Pink Pearl. I asked her why I was only hearing about this group now, but she reassured me that it was still a good time to connect with other women like me and that there was a retreat coming up that I should try to attend. I was sold!

Going to my first retreat alone was a bit nerve racking, but I was so eager to meet women like me that I was more excited than anything. I met so many women that weekend – and some I already knew from other groups and programs. I was inspired by all other their stories and felt a new-found pride in telling my own. I was a survivor too, after all! We talked about everything that weekend and nothing was taboo or off the table. We cried. We laughed. We shared. It was so comforting to be surrounded by so many women like me.

Since then, I've attended two more retreats. I've also attended socials, galas, personal development workshops and recently, I held a cooking class for a small group, thanks to lots of encouragement from my Pink Pearl family. Next, I'd like to plan a social to fundraise and give back to this organization that's given so much to me. I am so grateful to Pink Pearl for everything they've given me, but most of all for the incredible friendships I've made and the sense of community I've found within this amazing group of women. I can wholeheartedly say that they have been an integral part of my recovery and I couldn't be more grateful for that.

- Lisa Lio, Program Participant

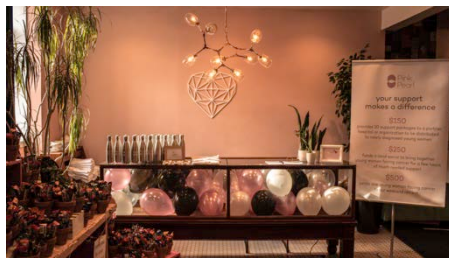




## OUR FUNDRAISING EVENTS & INITIATIVES

We have successfully raised more than \$550,000 to date to directly fund our support programs for young women facing cancer through our key annual fundraising initiatives.

**Black & White with a Touch of Pink** is our annual springtime fundraising event generating donations for our suite of support-based programming. On April 25, 2019, more than 275 guests came together at Love Child Social House in downtown Toronto for an unforgettable evening, collectively raising \$45,000 to support young women facing cancer.



**One Fine Day** is our year-round fundraising and awareness-raising initiative that encourages our supporters to customize and host their own events and celebrate life with loved ones in meaningful ways. In 2018, 14 events were held across Ontario, raising over \$11,000.



The Post Office at Shannon Passero in Thorold hosted two Shopping Events this year, raising over \$600.



Christa and Kate, Pink Pearl program participants, hosted a Ladies, Lipstick and Love event, raising over \$800.

thank you

Dana, a Pink Pearl program participant, hosted two fundraising events this year, raising over \$1,000.

## KEY LEARNINGS

Pink Pearl Canada continues to exceed our growth expectations. With the continued guidance and strategic advice from our board of directors, partners and volunteers, we are running effective support programs for young women facing cancer and adopting best practices in our daily operations.

Our key learnings are highlighted below:

### Our Programs

The young women facing cancer who attend our programs, feel supported during their cancer journey. Whether it be at a Retreat, Local Social, Learning Series session or through our Private Facebook Group, these young women have built strong friendships that will last a lifetime. We understand the need for our peer-support programs and have expanded our retreats to the Kingston and Calgary area.

### Our Volunteers + Team Members

As we grow, we are continually evaluating how we can strengthen our team. This year, we appointed 3 part-time (3-6mth) contractors to focus on Fundraising and Programs. By having these three women as a part of our team we were able to increase our reach, and raise more funds for the organization. We are so grateful for the work that our volunteer team continually does for Pink Pearl, as they provide the backbone to everything we do. Our volunteer team works closely with our part-time Programs and Communications Manager, to ensure sustainable growth is met within the organization.

### Our Fundraising

Our revenue is generated through generous donations and fundraising events, notably our annual signature *Black & White with a Touch of Pink* event. We have learned to minimize our event expenses by heightening outreach to donors and soliciting sponsorship. We have learned how effective our supporters are in generating awareness and funds through third-party fundraisers they have hosted.

"As an ambassador, volunteer, and participant, I take pride in everything Pink Pearl does for the AYA cancer community. My goal is to inspire other young women affected by cancer to reach out and focus on their mental health by connecting with other women who just get it."

Maddie Jenkins  
Ambassador + Programs Volunteer





## PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES



"The community that Pink Pearl has created has changed my life for the better. I became a Pink Pearl participant over this past year. At the retreat I was able to make connections with others who truly did get what going through cancer was like -- women who understand my pain, and lift me up, who are always willing to encourage me when I am down. Pink Pearl has given me the chance to continue to heal and grow from my past".

- Hanna, Program Participant



"Finding Pink Pearl has definitely been one of the best things that has happened to me since diagnosis. In celebration of about a year since connecting for the first time with Pink Pearl, I'm using my upcoming birthday to give back. So here's to 25, and to making a fundraising pledge in honour of everything Pink Pearl does for young women coping with cancer."

- Sarah, Program Participant

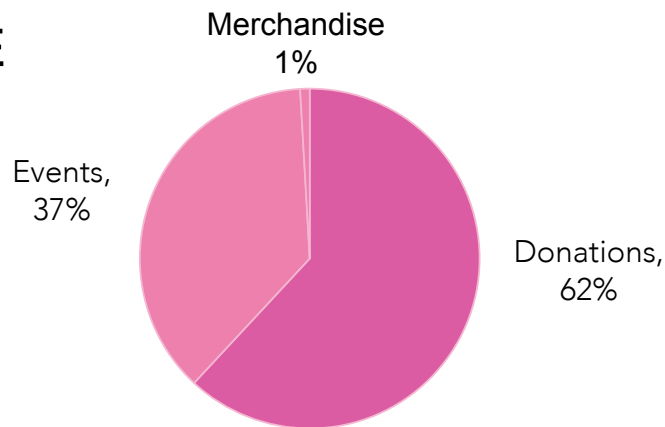
## FINANCIALS

Pink Pearl Canada relies on the financial support of our community through net funds raised at fundraising event, with third-party fundraisers and online donations. Our donors provide the funds to fuel our program expansion across Canada as our team supports even more young women facing cancer.

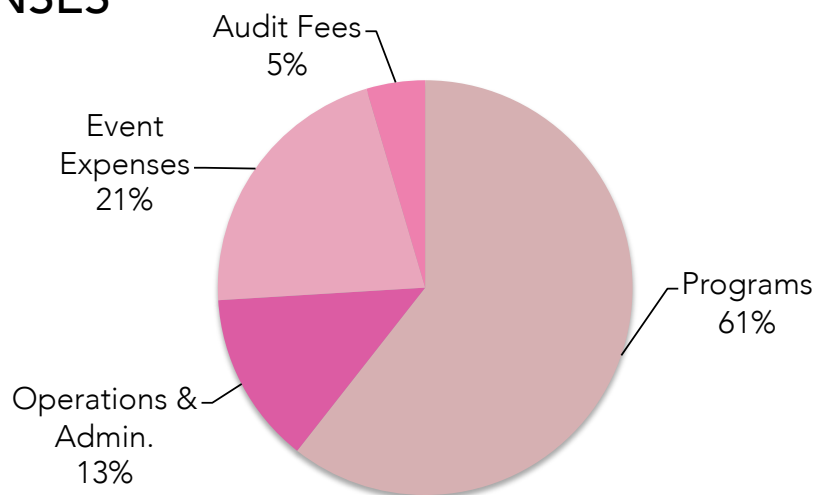
Below is a breakdown of our revenue sources and expenses in FY2018-2019. As we continue our fundraising efforts in FY2019-2020, we shift our focus to increasing personal and corporate donations, while reducing event-related expenses.

The audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending April 30, 2019, including the notes to the financial statements and the auditor's report, are available via [info@pinkpearlcanada.org](mailto:info@pinkpearlcanada.org).

### REVENUE



### EXPENSES



## SUCCESES

To date, Pink Pearl Canada has supported over  
2,000 young women with cancer

Hosted 10 Retreats in Niagara and Toronto

Supported hundreds of women at our  
Local Socials and Brunch & Learns

Provided over 1,000 Support Packages to young women  
recently diagnosed with cancer in hospitals + wellness centres

Awarded nine \$1,000 Post-Secondary Scholarships

Expanded our team with 10 dedicated volunteers, and  
two part-time contractors.







Cancer, we get it.  
Support for young women.