



compassion  
house FOUNDATION

## COMPASSION THROUGH CRISIS

Thank you for staying connected with us through our quarterly newsletter!

As we reflect on the last three months (which will surely go down in history!), let us start by saying a heartfelt thank you for your continued support. Cancer doesn't take a day off, and it's only because of you that we've been able to remain open, operational, and responsive to the needs of women across western Canada battling cancer.

In this edition, you'll find: our response to COVID-19; our commitment to anti-racism; a one-on-one conversation with a long-time supporter; success stories from the community; new details about the much-anticipated Syncrude presents Fashion with Compassion; and safe opportunities for you to get involved.



### Staying Safe through COVID-19

When the World Health Organization first declared the Coronavirus (COVID-19) a global pandemic in March, the future felt uncertain, but we knew we had to act to keep our guests, staff, and community healthy and safe. We postponed public events scheduled in Grande Prairie and adapted how we live and work at Sorrentino's Compassion House—and continue to do so as the situation remains active and ever-evolving.

**How has COVID-19 impacted Sorrentino's Compassion House?** Hear from Saylor, our Guest & House Services Administrator, about our "new normal."

### Taking Action Towards Anti-Racism

Like all of you, we watched in horror as George Floyd was murdered by police in Minneapolis last month. It was a tragedy that should never have happened and could have easily been prevented.

Over the last few weeks, we've been taking time to listen and learn as we stand in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Lives Matter movements. But, solidarity is simply not enough. As an organization that serves a diverse community of women and their families, **we must be actively anti-racist in all aspects of our work.**

[Read Our CEO Message](#)

### Board Alumni Spotlight: Carmelo Rago Jr.

Sorrentino's Restaurant Group has been involved with Compassion House Foundation since the beginning—so much so that our main service, Sorrentino's Compassion House, is named in recognition of the leadership support of the Rago and Saccomanno families and their Sorrentino's Restaurant Group of companies.

Now, former board member Carmelo Rago Jr. is carrying on his family's legacy. In our Q&A, he tells us how he wants to continue the wonderful work of those who came before him in his family and hopefully inspire more people his age to get involved.

[Read Our Full Conversation](#)

### Community Steps Up to #HelptheHouse

In March, our inventory of paper products, cleaning supplies, and communal grocery items was beginning to run low due to COVID-19. So, we asked the community to **#HelptheHouse**, requesting donations through social media and media coverage in Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, and Lloydminster. ... and **the response was tremendous!**

We replenished our inventory with more than \$5,000 of in-kind donations and raised more than \$13,000 in monetary donations. Donations from **#HelptheHouse** went to use immediately supporting guests with their most pressing needs and creating stability as the effects of COVID-19 are felt into the future.

**Thank you for helping women on their cancer journey through COVID-19!**

### Sharing Sandy's Story on #GivingTuesdayNow

This year, in addition to the regularly-scheduled [Giving Tuesday](#), a new global day of giving called [#GivingTuesdayNow](#) took place on May 5, 2020, as an emergency response to the unprecedented need caused by COVID-19. We participated with a goal to raise \$5,000 for our **Compassion Fund**, which provides financial support for women staying at Sorrentino's Compassion House to help eliminate barriers to cancer treatment. Through your support, we raised \$4,205 on the day-of and an additional \$5,800 within the following week. Altogether, **we raised a total of \$10,005** to exceed our goal!

Thank you to everyone who contributed on **#GivingTuesdayNow!** Now, guests like Sandy won't have to choose between accommodations, food, mileage, or other travel expenses and their treatment. Instead, they can invest in what's most important: **healing.**

### Introducing... the Compassion Network!

The Compassion Network helps connect women from communities across Alberta with individuals, tools, and resources to better navigate the cancer journey. It's made up of past house guests, called Ambassadors, who act as our voice in the community—representing us at events, hosting fundraisers, facilitating support groups, and being a resource for those recently diagnosed.

The first step: training! In a two-part Zoom series, our 14 inaugural Ambassadors learned first from CEO Michelle Okere about public speaking and being a representative of Compassion House Foundation in the community. Then, Ieva Kimonte coached the Ambassadors on listening techniques and how to organize relevant content for meetings to help them facilitate a support group and provide one-on-one support.

**Want to know more?** [Email Nancy](#) for more information or to apply as an Ambassador!

## UPCOMING EVENTS



That's right! In response to COVID-19, we reimaged our signature fundraiser and go-to fashion event. This year's **Syncrude presents Fashion with Compassion At Home** will be a **virtual experience** set at our home, Sorrentino's Compassion House, enjoyed from the comfort and safety of your home—no matter where you live! This is a first in Fashion with Compassion's near-25 year history.

Tickets are on sale now, and we'd love for you to join us! **Purchase your tickets by July 31, and you'll be automatically entered into our Early Bird Prize Draw** for 3 chances to win a Collection Box filled with gifts from local businesses valued at over \$200.

[Buy Tickets](#)



### Virtual We Can Workshop: My Mental Health with Cancer and COVID

Join us for our first Virtual We Can Workshop, made up of **four 1.5 hour Zoom sessions facilitated by Pat Casey Jurgens (RN, BScN, MN)**. During the first three sessions, we'll talk about the reality of being a cancer survivor, validating the toll this difficult journey takes on your mental health as a whole and within the context of COVID-19. The fourth session will be a special evening of sharing during a roundtable discussion.

This workshop is **available at no charge to current and past guests of Sorrentino's Compassion House**. There are dates in **July and September**, so you can pick what works best for your schedule. **Spots are limited to 20 participants per session.**

[Learn More & Register](#)

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### Fundraising Casino: Postponed

Our fundraising casino originally scheduled for June 21-22 has been postponed until further notice due to COVID-19. All current volunteers will remain on a contact list to be notified once we have our new dates. If your availability has changed, or you'd like to be removed from the list, please let us know.

**We still need a few volunteers to help once its rescheduled. Interested?** [Contact Nancy](#) for more information.

### Pressing Pause

We miss our volunteers! You do so much to enhance our guest experience, help us execute our fundraising events, and support our organization as a whole.

However, for health and safety reasons, there are currently no volunteer opportunities with Compassion House Foundation. Sorrentino's Compassion House remains closed to external visitors, and Fashion with Compassion is scheduled to take place virtually later this year.

**Once opportunities become available again, we'll let you know!** Watch our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#), or [send us an email](#) so you we can contact you directly.

## Extended Family

### Join our Extended Family with a Monthly Donation

When you join our Extended Family, your monthly donation allows us to continue to function optimally for our guests—the women who are facing the most troubling times of their lives.

This valuable source of reliable income allows us to plan ahead in creating a haven of healing support within Sorrentino's Compassion House and through our after-care programs. Your generosity reassures women battling cancer—and their families—that you care. And that is what compassion is all about.

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