

She rollerbladed across Canada to fight leukemia, now she's back to continue the fight

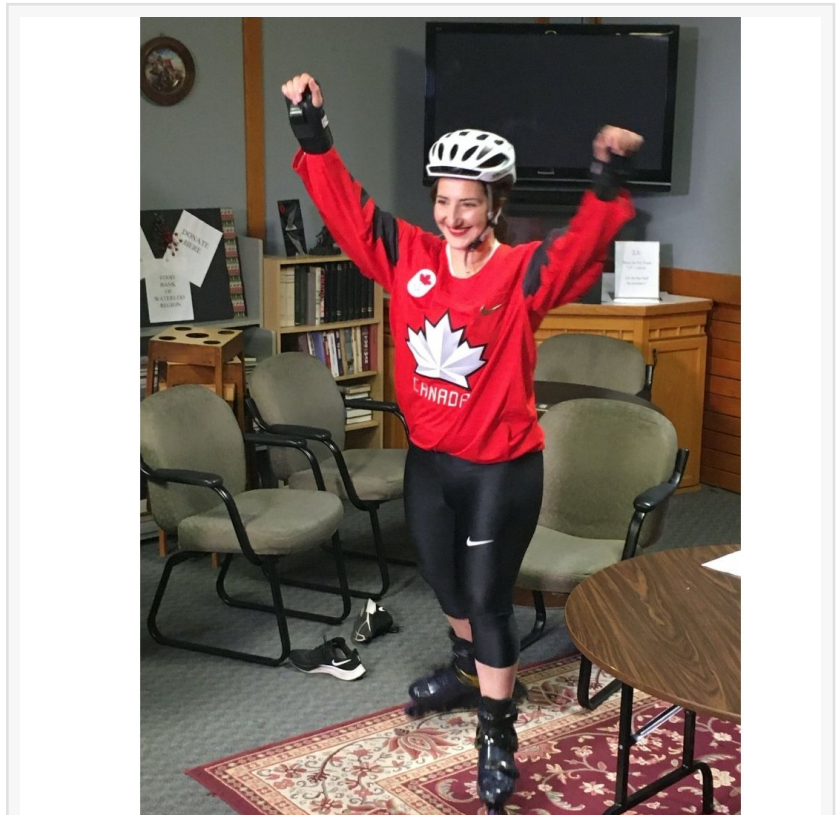
Christine Ichim, the girl who rollerbladed across Canada, strapped on her rollerblades again to embark on the mission of cancer prevention in the fire services.

KITCHENER, ONTARIO, CANADA, October 14, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Christine Ichim, the girl who rollerbladed across Canada, strapped on her rollerblades once again to embark on the mission of cancer prevention in the fire services.

"You are the reason I finished the skate," said Ichim, at a press event held in Kitchener on Oct. 8 to commemorate the completion of that journey "and you are the hope for all these firefighters whose greatest threat to life is not fire but cancer."

Ichim became the first woman to rollerblade across Canada in 1996, a six-month 8000-kilometer journey she undertook to bring awareness and raise funds for leukemia. Ichim returned to her home town for a press event that commemorated the completion of that journey. She was back in her hometown to thank the people who made it possible for her to embark on that epic venture, and she put on her skates once again to embark on a new mission.

"It was really the entire Kitchener Waterloo community that came together, hand over fist, and together we pulled it off," said Ichim, "I am so immensely grateful to my sponsors, and to everyone who donated; to each and everyone of you. I could not have done it without your support" she said.



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The event was held at the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans Club in Kitchener, a critical sponsor of her 1996 skate across Canada. The club came through for her in the earliest stages of her fundraising campaign, funding the project from the very beginning and backing her efforts throughout the journey.

“My mom said that if the Army, Navy & Air Force veterans have my back, I will surely make it back safe.”

Ichim’s mother Florica was the inspiration for the 1996 event. Florica Ichim developed leukemia when Christine was 10, and her mother’s valiant fight against the disease was the defining moment of young Christine’s life, motivating her to go into science while still in high school so she could find a cure for her mother’s illness and leading to her monumental achievement in 1996.



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“I wanted to give her hope,” Ichim said of her mother, “To show her that nothing is impossible as long as the human spirit continues to fight.”

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Christine Ichim

Ichim also wanted to express her undying gratitude to all of those who helped her along the way, from local sponsors such as Economical Insurance and Elmira Poultry (who provided an escort vehicle her team fondly called the “chicken van”) to the many Canadians along the route who contributed money, support and encouragement to her effort.

“I love you Canada....Each and every one of you, you’ve made a difference. I remember every high-five, every honk, every person who pulled me over to donate, every city, every mile, every office of the Economical Insurance Group that I stopped off at along the trek— every pat on the back gave me a burst of energy, and I kept going for you, for Peter Jang, for Pamela and Ruth, for every cancer patient I met along the way. You made a difference.”

She described one such example when she told of a fall she suffered while crossing the Rockies, and how the staff of the small town hospital where she was treated did more than patch up her injuries.

“For five hours I spoke to the nicest doctors as they picked out the stones in my wounds. Five hours. I will never forget how they went around the hospital raising enough money to pay for my hotel so I would have a bed to recover in. I was so concerned about reaching my mileage quota. I had road rash on a third of my body, it was so luxurious to be able to just have a chance to heal.”

Ichim would go on to devote her life to science, earning a PhD in molecular biology from the University of Toronto and ultimately founding her own biotech firm in San Francisco.

“Research saves lives!” Ichim stated. “When my mother was diagnosed with cancer leukemia was a death sentence with a prognosis of 2-3 years.

Because of medical research she lived a total of 23 years, beating the odds by 20 years!”

Ichim wanted to use the 25th anniversary commemoration to put a spotlight on another urgent problem, the emergence of cancer as the leading cause of death among firefighters in Canada and the United States.

“When you think of the job of a firefighter, it is an inherently dangerous job. Smoke inhalation, structural collapse, being trapped in a fast moving fire. These are the dangers we see in the movies and the news. The truth is that the greatest danger to a firefighter lurks deep inside the cell. Cancer is the No. 1 cause of firefighter mortality in the line of duty. Not auto accidents, not asphyxiation, not explosion, but cancer.”

Ichim urged listeners to support continued research into cancer, its causes and how to prevent it in the fire service and treat those who fall ill.

“Kitchener Waterloo is the heart of the technology triangle. I encourage everyone to help me advocate for increased funding for medical research.”



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Here's how you can help—

To follow their progress: <https://www.facebook.com/CrossCanadaRollerblader/>

To donate: <https://gofund.me/5e9c0ad3>

About the [Cancer Cure Campaign](#)

Christine Ichim was the first woman to rollerblade across Canada, achieving that feat in 1996 and part of an effort to raise awareness and funds for leukemia research. Her commitment to fighting cancer has never wavered, as Ichim has devoted her professional career as a scientist to finding a cure for this most dangerous opponent. Ichim obtained a PhD in Cancer Biology from the University of Toronto and completed postdoctoral training at the Salk Institute and Lawrence Berkeley National Labs. Ichim is now CEO of Florica Therapeutics.

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