

- [Local](#)
- [National](#)
- [World](#)
- [Births](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Celebrations](#)
- [Special Reports](#)

Business

Classified

Community

Discussions

Entertainment

Life

Opinion

Sports

For fan battling cancer, Voisine's visit a dream

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RECORD STAFF

KITCHENER -- He was there in her hardest times. When she was nauseated, his words calmed her stomach.

When she couldn't sleep, his music closed her eyes.

But until yesterday, the man who eased Kathy Fleischmann's pain during her six-month battle with breast cancer was only a voice on the stereo.

Charmed by his lyrics and mushy for his dark good looks, Fleischmann has been a dedicated Roch Voisine fan for years.

With her equally fanatic twin sister, Irma Boereboom, the 36-year-old Ayr woman has seen the bilingual star in several concerts and owns most of his CDs.



Roch Voisine meets fan Kathy Fleischmann of Ayr at CHYM offices and studios in Kitchener yesterday.

When she learned the singer would be coming to Kitchener during one of the darkest times of her sister's life, the idea of taking in the concert seemed fitting, said Boereboom. Watching her sister go through intensive chemotherapy after being diagnosed, Boereboom saw the concert as a possible light at the end of the tunnel.

"It was something for her to look forward to," said Boereboom of the concert conveniently timed only a few weeks after Fleischmann's last scheduled chemotherapy before Thanksgiving.

For awhile, the gift was the perfect motivator. Struggling to handle the pressures of treatment with the help of family and friends, Fleischmann turned to Voisine's music for support.

She pictured how different her life would be in only a few months.

BAD NEWS

Then the bad news. Test showed Fleischmann's blood count was dangerously low -- her chemotherapy would have to continue.

The concert -- full of people and germs -- would now be too dangerous for Fleischmann, who must be very careful what she exposes to her weakened system.

"It's just too much of a risk."

But it was not the end of Fleischmann's Voisine dream. Boereboom was determined to lift her sister's spirits and turned to staff at local radio station 96.7 CHYM FM for help.

Perhaps, she suggested, they could help the pair see a rehearsal or sound check.

Never in her wildest dreams did she imagine the face-to-face encounter arranged at the radio station yesterday afternoon.

Giddy as schoolgirls, the sisters nervously waited to meet the man they'd only glimpsed from the crowd.

Even for the star, who meets excited fans everyday, the meeting had special meaning.

"We're extremely cut off from the reality and effects of our music," said Voisine, who was touched to learn his music helped Fleischmann with her illness. "You really feel you did something important."

While Fleischmann is still disappointed she couldn't attend the concert last night with her sister -- their mother is now going in her place -- the short meeting lifted her spirits. She only wishes there was another reason for the special occasion.

Now with her last treatment over, she is slowly recovering with a good prognosis. She is optimistic and eager about the future -- and about Voisine's new album due out next month.

"It's an end to a six-month-long struggle."

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