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By Lucie van den Berg 17 September 2011

Olivia Has a Million Reasons to Smile

Olivia Newton-John had one million reasons to be happy yesterday when a Melbourne family made an unprecedented donation to her cancer centre that opens in June. But their generosity reduced the singer to tears.

"I'm so touched this morning, it's very overwhelming," she said. "To give an amount of \$1 million is incredible."

Carlo Montagner and Bozena Zembrzuski are urging others to follow in their philanthropic footsteps.

Last week entrepreneur Dick Smith accused rich Aussies of failing to open their hearts and wallets. The pair, who are founders of a pharmaceutical company, said their donation was a personal contribution inspired by their exposure to the healthcare world, their experience living in the US - where philanthropy is more prevalent and the knowledge that cancer affects so many people.

"We understand that not everyone can give \$1 million, but we just hope that just as we have been inspired by the action of others, perhaps this donation might inspire you to do the same," they said. "In our lifetime there is a very real possibility that you will be touched by cancer, as we have."

Newton-John's life was turned upside down when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She shared her story with brain-cancer patient Steve Symons yesterday in the day oncology ward where the 26-year-old is undergoing chemotherapy for a brain tumour called medulloblastoma. He took his Carlton beanie off for her. "No one takes their hat off for me," the fellow Blues supporter laughed.

To donate to the Olivia Newton-John Cancer and Wellness Centre, call (03) 9496 5753 or visit www.oliviaappeal.com.

