

Sisters band together to create Walk 4 a Cure

By Melanie Hennessey
Special to The IFP

After losing her mother to cancer almost a decade ago, Michelle Kuipery's desire to find a cure for cancer was stronger than ever.

Since then the 29-year-old Acton woman and her three sisters devoted themselves to fundraising for valuable research that may help save others. But they've also taken their efforts one step further, fuelled by their wish to see 100 per cent of the funds they raise go directly into research initiatives. The sisters launched their own cancer walk— called Walk 4 a Cure— in 2012 and are gearing up for this year's five-kilometre event on Sunday.

"When we walk it's not about all the sponsors, fundraising prizes, free shirts and the political people who show up. It's about walking for a cause and putting the maximum amount of money into research without getting anything in return," explained Kuipery. "We are a third-party event for the Cancer Research Society, and since we do the work they have agreed to

give 100 per cent of the money to cancer research in the field of our choice."

Over the past four years the girls have raised \$55,000 and counting. Once they reach their goal of \$60,000, the money will be matched by the Cancer Research Society and devoted to researching nutrigenomics—the scientific study of the interaction of nutrition and genes, particularly in regard to preventing diseases.

"It's a fairly new area of research that's promising and may help in the prevention of cancer," said Kuipery.

The sisters named their research grant Isaiah 40:31 in honour of their mother's favourite Bible verse:

"But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Kuipery's mother was first diagnosed with breast cancer in 1995 at the age of 35— something that was relatively uncommon in young people at that time. The next 11 years brought an off-and-on battle with the disease as it spread to her lymphatic



Acton's Michelle Kuipery (far left) is joined by her sisters (left to right) Caitlyn Passchier, April Douwes and Cassandra Vedder every year in the Walk 4 a Cure cancer fundraising event they created to devote 100 per cent of donations to research.

Submitted photo

system and sternum.

"Every time that she almost had a clean bill of health, it would come back," said Kuipery. "I was in Grade 12 the third time she had it, and doctors said it wasn't curable anymore."

After her mother passed away in 2006, Kuipery said she and a friend spearheaded a fundraiser fashion show and auction that brought in over \$12,000 for the Canadian Cancer Society. She went on to participate in

the Run for the Cure for a few years and was a top fundraiser for the 2011 edition of the event for the Kitchener/Waterloo region.

But after researching where the funds she had raised are going and discovering that much is put into administration, fundraising fees and other aspects of the cause, Kuipery and her sisters were compelled to do something different. It was then that Walk 4 a Cure was born.

"My sisters and I just want the money to go to cancer. And the return is that we're doing something good. We don't need anything else in return," she said. "My mom was a fundraiser, so I know she would be happy."

Taking all of her fundraising efforts into account over the past nine years, and provided this year's goal is met, Kuipery will have co-ordinated teams that have raised a total of \$100,000 for cancer. She said this personal accomplishment wouldn't have been possible without the support of her sisters, friend Michelle, other family and friends, and those who've contributed to her cause each year.

"The support has been overwhelming, that's for sure," said Kuipery.

The Cancer Research Society is a national organization with a sole mission to fight cancer through funding research.

The 2015 Walk 4 a Cure will take place on Sunday at Huron Natural Park in Kitchener. For more information or to make a donation to Walk 4 a Cure visit www.walkforacure.ca.



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