

Zumbathon raises awareness and funds for Lyme Disease



Bev Aalbers with Zumba Instructors - Dawn Brown photos

By: Dawn Brown

Acton resident, Bev Aalbers, hosted a Zumbathon for Lyme Disease this past Saturday, October 3 at the Dufferin Rural Heritage Community Centre to help raise awareness and funds in support of the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation.

Aalbers, who suffers with Lyme Disease, had initially planned to ride her bicycle from Queens Park to Ottawa in an attempt to bring awareness to Lyme Disease, especially the importance of receiving early treatment. She began training with Adam Andrews. However, as the date drew closer, Aalbers realized she would not be strong

enough to make the trip.

"My legs weren't working," Aalbers explained. Her trainer, Andrews, suggested a Zumbathon for Lyme Disease instead.

Participants donated \$15 to take part, or be sponsored. There were also a number of raffles for prizes ranging from a guitar from Pinecone Music to a two night overnight stay at Sauble Beach, Zip Lining at the Elora Gorge as well as a number of gift baskets and cards.

Employees from Scotiabank here in Acton were among the volunteers taking part on Saturday. Through one of Scotiabank's programs, the bank will be matching the funds raised up to \$5,000.

"The community has been so generous in their donation of raffle prizes," Aalbers said. She was also grateful for all the hard work from the Zumba instructors, especially after being involved in another fundraiser just three weeks earlier. "They just stepped up to do a party for me. Volunteered, no questions asked. Absolutely phenomenal."

Aalbers first contracted Lyme Disease in June of 2012, but wasn't diagnosed until one year later.

"Our (Canadian) testing is poor. 62 per cent failure rate," explained Aalbers. "Just because you get a negative test does not mean you don't have Lyme Disease. It's a very serious problem, and the Can-

adian government admits that."

Because Aalbers could not get a positive test here in Canada, she must seek treatment in the U.S., which costs her approximately \$20,000 every year.

"My retirement has gone to pay for my health," Aalbers said. "And that would be about the same for every other Lyme patient."

For Aalbers, awareness, especially for early detection, was the key factor for the Zumbathon. "Awareness and we need a better test yesterday," she said. "If I could have got a positive test in the beginning when I started to show symptoms, I wouldn't be here today. We wouldn't be having a Zumbathon."

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