

GEORGETOWN FAMILY RAISING AWARENESS OF TOURETTE'S SYNDROME

MELANIE HENNESSEY
mhennessey@metroland.com

Little Grayson Ford-King looks like your average four-year-old, playing with toys and having fun with his older brother.

But he was only two when his parents realized that something was different about their baby boy.

"It started with head-jerking and shoulder shrugging and turned into coughing, but he wouldn't be sick," recalled mom Ellen Howard. "And over the past year he started hitting himself in the head sometimes, and making throat-clearing/grunting noises."

The local parent, who lives in Georgetown with husband Todd Ford-King, six-year-old son Jackson and Grayson, knew something was wrong and booked a pediatrician appointment, which turned up no results.

"I ended up doing a lot of

research, and all of his symptoms pointed to Tourette's syndrome," she said.

After being referred to Toronto Western Hospital's Tourette's syndrome neurodevelopmental clinic, the family's fears were confirmed.

"I expected the diagnosis, but it was still really upsetting," said Howard. "You go online and read the horror stories, and you're scared because you never know what you'll end up with."

Grayson is among a small group of individuals with Tourette's syndrome, which Tourette Canada defines as a neurodevelopmental or brain-based condition that causes people who have it to make involuntary sounds and movement called tics.

The rare condition is what inspired the Ford-King/Howard family to launch a local version of the Trek for Tourette, an

annual five-kilometre walk held in communities across the country in support of Tourette Canada.

On Sunday (March 24), the first Georgetown instalment of the walk will make its way through local streets, with Grayson's parents and friend Andrea Butt - whose son Evan has also been diagnosed with Tourette's syndrome - heading up the Tic Talk Walk team.

In addition to raising awareness, the group is collecting donations that will benefit the services provided by Tourette Canada, including resources for schools and virtual support groups.

While the team started off small and was originally going to gather at the Ford-King's home to kick off the walk, it has now grown to 40 participants and moved its start/finish line to the Furnace Room Brewery.

Since receiving Gray-



Todd Ford-King photo

Georgetown's Todd Ford-King, wife Ellen Howard and children (from left) Jackson, 6 and Grayson, 4, will be walking in support of Tourette Canada this weekend. Grayson was recently diagnosed with the condition.

son's diagnosis, the family has been frequenting a clinic in Toronto to see psychologists who can help with other issues that come along with Tourette's syndrome.

"The tics are just the tip of the iceberg," explained Howard. "Grayson is the

sweetest kid who has a very bad temper. He can't deal with his emotions - everything is very black and white."

Grayson will also be starting a new therapy this summer designed to train his brain to do something else instead of specific tics;

following that, the family may explore the option of medication, if needed.

"For social reasons, (Tourette's syndrome) is really hard because he does it a lot, and it's a very intrusive noise," said Howard, noting that school situations where children are encouraged to be quiet are particularly challenging. "When he's about to tic, he said he feels like there's bugs or snakes in his throat. It's like when someone is going to sneeze, and you don't get relief until it comes out."

Almost \$1,000 has been raised by the Tic Talk team so far - a number that far surpasses their original goal of \$500. The group is meeting at the Furnace Room Brewery, located at 1 Elgin St., Georgetown, at 12:15 p.m. on Sunday, with the walk getting underway at 12:30 p.m. Those looking to make a donation or participate can visit tourette.tng-secure.com.



Mark Your Calendar: Spring Rabies Clinic

Sponsored by Dr. F Walker

Date: Apr. 27, 2019
Time: 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Location
Premier Equipment,
8911 Wellington Road 124, Ospringe

Cash Only

UPPER CREDIT HUMANE SOCIETY
Shelter 519.833.2287 | Thrift Shop 905.702.8661
www.uppercredit.com | info@uppercredit.com
Charitable Registration #893738872RR001

NEW OPTOMETRY OFFICE IN DOWNTOWN GEORGETOWN

GIDDENS OPTOMETRY

has opened a 2nd location at the Mill Street Medical Centre.



DOWNTOWN GEORGETOWN
83 Mill St | 905 873 1867



METRO PLAZA
371 Mountainview Rd S | 905 873 1861

FAMILY EYE CARE SERVICES

Day, Evening and Saturday Hours | Same day appointments for urgent eye care. Please phone.

Dr. Ben Giddens **Dr. Andrea Kozma** **Dr. Stephanie Britton**



Domino's®

ORDER ONLINE  DOMINOS.CA

We're Moving!



Coming Soon... visit our new location!

NEW **324 Guelph St., Georgetown**
(Plaza beside Tim Hortons)