

Relay for Life organizers hope to raise \$100,000

LISA TALLYN
Staff Writer

Celebrate, remember and fight back is what the Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life is all about.

The event— set for June 6-7 at Gellert Community Park in Georgetown South from 7 p.m. (Friday) to 7 a.m. (Saturday) — is more than just a fundraiser. It's an opportunity to get together with family and friends and celebrate cancer survivors, remember loved ones lost to cancer and fight back in the hope of finding a cure for this terrible disease.

Sue Scarfone, fundraising co-ordinator with the Brampton/Caledon/Georgetown/Dufferin County Unit of the Canadian Cancer Society says the goal for this year's event in town is \$100,000.

Last year's Relay for Life in Georgetown, which was the second one held here, raised \$80,000 with 43 teams taking part. So far this year 49 teams have already signed on.

Alexander the Great is one of those teams.

The team is named for five-year-old Alex Ringuette who, at the age of three, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

After two-and-a-half years of treatment Alex is in remission and doing well, said his sister Heather MacKinnon who, along with other family members including sister Karen MacKinnon and friends, make up Alex's team.

They want to do what they can to help in the fight against cancer after witnessing their little brother's battle first-hand and that of friends who have also been diagnosed with leukemia.

Heather said Alex spent 96 days in hospi-



Five-year-old Alex Ringuette was recently joined by his sisters Heather and Karen MacKinnon, as they laced up their running shoes in preparation for the upcoming Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life, held June 6-7 at Gellert Community Park in Georgetown South from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Photo by Ted Brown

tal when he was first diagnosed and received about two-and-a-half years of chemotherapy treatments. He also underwent 10 rounds of radiation.

She said her brother was on steroids throughout the treatment and there were days he didn't feel well and was nauseous but throughout she said Alex "did very well."

Mom Linda Ringuette said Alex finished his last treatment in November and under-

goes monthly blood work to ensure the cancer hasn't come back.

The little boy has had some ill effects from the treatment, including damage to the sight in one of his eyes and osteoporosis. They will monitor over the long-term to see how much osteoporosis he suffered.

"I know that Alex's legs are weak but he's still improving. He has good days and bad days," said Linda.

Linda said this is Alex's family's third year

participating in the Relay for Life. Those who aren't walking this year plan to volunteer at the event.

"It's awesome" Linda said of the Relay. "It's bittersweet. We're there because of an eye-opening experience in our family life. It's very emotional."

Scarfone said participants can register as a team right up until the event. Each member must pay a \$10 registration fee and a minimum of \$100 in pledges.

Cancer survivors are all welcome and invited to attend a free reception prior to the event and take part in a Survivor's Victory Lap. Scarfone is hoping a cancer researcher will be there to speak to the survivors.

Those who take part in the victory lap can choose to have their names read out over the public address system.

"It's a celebration of hope for the survivors," said Scarfone.

She said they have received overwhelming support for the event from many businesses in the community and from the Town of Halton Hills, but there is always a need for more volunteers at the event.

Volunteers are needed to help fill and set up the luminaries, hand out t-shirts, and help with food and registration.

Anyone interested in volunteering for the event is asked to sign up in advance by contacting Karen at 905-451-4460 ext. 21 as soon as possible.

To sign up as a team member or volunteer, join the Survivors' Victory Lap, buy a luminary (to be placed around the track), pledge a participant or make a general donation to the event go to www/cancer.ca/relay.

(Lisa Tallyn can be reached at ltallyn@independentfreepress.com)

Board superintendent denies cuts to EAs in the works

Continued from pg. 1

"There has been no intent to change the total allotment of EAs in Halton.... We are caught in a collective agreement timeline," said Schaffer. "Our EAs are our most fluid (employee group). It's been an ongoing difficulty for EAs and schools to allow us (some scheduling) flexibility."

Schaffer acknowledged the holdback on EAs is a little longer this year than in past years in order to provide that flexibility.

"We allocate a certain percentage in May and the next allocation is in June to see where the (special needs) children are, and there is another allocation just before school opens. This gives us a little breathing space through the summer as children settle into place."

Circumstances like late enrolment of students, the new identification of those with special needs, transfers from other school boards and the yearly influx of new Junior and Senior Kindergarten students, affect the number of EAs required, said Schaffer.

The EAs contract with the board runs out at the end of this August.

Gurzi said contract talks involving EAs have not begun at the public board level.

Meanwhile, the Halton Catholic District School Board reported recently it might give parents of children with mild intellectual

disabilities and developmental disabilities more options for their education.

A staff report recommends the creation of

Acton mom fears for daughter's education

EAMONN MAHER
Staff Writer

Caught in the middle of what she sees as an unclear situation in terms of the education of her own special needs child is parent Lisa Weaver of Acton.

Her eight-year-old daughter Sydney attends McKenzie-Smith Bennett Public School and due to cerebral palsy requires a wheelchair. While Sydney's verbal and cognitive skills are fine, she requires support for things such as writing and using the washroom, depending upon a specially-trained EA to help her perform those tasks.

"If she doesn't have an EA, who's going to look after her— the regular teacher?" asked Weaver.

"The teacher has 22 other students to look after. This whole issue about EAs affects every child and I don't think the general population knows what's at stake.

congregated classes at St. John School in Oakville and St. Raphael School in Burlington for students in Grades 5-8, who

"The leaps and bounds my daughter has made because of the four EAs she's had has been amazing. In fact, (this) week she's going to the Special Olympics event in Halton and her EA is going with her. It's not a body that can be replaced."

Weaver spoke with board superintendent Kathy Schaffer on the telephone last week, demanding answers to her questions. She can't understand why, that at a time when school populations are growing in North Halton, EA staff reductions would even be considered.

"We're being told that they're going to re-allocate the EAs to be used elsewhere. Why? They're needed here. Our family isn't moving," Weaver added.

"If everything is okay as Ms. Schaffer insists and this is just normal procedure, then why was (M-SB vice principal) Caroline Rice asked to put together an appeal letter, and why have five EAs been told that they won't be back at M-SB next year?"

have developmental disabilities. The classes would have an enrolment cap of 10 students and would be run by a special education teacher and two EAs.

Students in those same grades with mild intellectual disabilities could be placed in a congregated class at Ascension School in Burlington, according to the report. Enrolment would not exceed 16 pupils, and would also be overseen by one special education teacher and two EAs.

It is expected the board will approve the initiative so classes will be in place for the new school year starting this September.

"Parents were informing us that students required more contained settings so they can make some gains, and we want to be able to provide that range of service because one size doesn't fit all," said Gary Mahoney, the Catholic board's superintendent of special education services.

The new classes would not be mandatory, allowing parents to choose if their child would be best educated in a regular classroom or in a congregated class.

The new system will reduce the number of Catholic EAs currently working with students on a one-on-one basis.

—with files from Tina Depko, special to the IFP

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