

# Terry Fox Run on Sunday in Acton

Founding member of the Acton Terry Fox Run, Jon Hurst, is celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Marathon of Hope with a series of articles in The New Tanner, leading to Sunday's Run. Here is his third report.

By John Hurst

This Sunday, September 19, the 30th anniversary Terry Fox Run will take place, rain or shine, at the Acton High School track. The official opening begins at 8 a.m., but participants can arrive any time between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. to run, walk, jog or cycle some or all of the 25 laps around the track. The event is not a race or a competition, but an opportunity for caring individuals and their families to complete the fundraising event at their own desired pace and length. Pledge sheets are available at all banks, Prosperity One, schools, Leathertown Lumber, Acton Home Hardware, Giant Tiger and other locations around town. You can also become involved by sponsoring a participant, or by dropping by Acton High School on run day with a donation. Anyone with questions or concerns can call Jon at 853-2015.

In 1977, when Terry Fox was 18-years old, a pain in his right knee led to the discovery of a rare bone disease, osteogenic sarcoma.



## A single dream, A world of hope The Terry Fox Foundation

This led to the amputation of his leg, followed by sixteen months of chemotherapy, and during that time, Fox was deeply affected by the heartache and suffering he saw around him in the cancer clinic. This gave him a new sense of strength and compassion, and he decided that he wanted to do something to make a difference. His dream was to run across Canada, to raise much needed funding for cancer research and to bring the scourge of cancer out into the open. Following months of training, Fox and his friend Doug Alward, flew to Newfoundland, and on April 20, 1980, he dipped his artificial leg into the waters of St. Johns harbour, and the Marathon of Hope began. He averaged 26 miles a day for 143 days, 3,339 miles, running through cold, wind, snow, rain, blazing hot sun, and the traffic, often almost running him off the road.

Many Halton Hills residents have cherished memories of having seen and even talked to Fox as the Marathon of Hope travelled through town over a three-day period. On Tuesday, July 22, Fox

completed his day's running on Highway 7 in Rockwood. Because he was slightly behind schedule, and the Cancer Society had organized a dinner in his honour held at the Lions Hall in Georgetown, Fox travelled from Rockwood on Tuesday evening to attend the dinner. The following morning he began again at Rockwood and ran through Acton, stopping around noon just outside of Georgetown. He was then driven to a special luncheon in Toronto to personally deliver his message to a group of businessmen. Bright and early the following morning, July 24, he ran through Georgetown and Norval. His Marathon of Hope continued as he headed to Northern Ontario and then west towards home. The only thing that could stop him was the return of his cancer, and on September 1, the unthinkable happened. He was forced to stop running just south of Thunder Bay because his cancer had returned, and following an emotional press conference, he was flown home to Vancouver for treatment.

Canadians across the country

were devastated by that news, and prayed for success in his return battle with cancer, but that was not to be. Fox died in the early morning hours of June 28, 1981, his favourite time of day, when the world was dark and still. Over the years there have been many eloquent and heartfelt statements made about Fox. Lloyd Robertson, CTV news anchor and staunch Fox supporter, described him this way: "What was it that made Terry so important to us? To me, he embodied the best of the Canadian spirit. We are a generous people, fair minded, not stridently patriotic, but deeply proud of our country. And we're courageous when we have to be, just like him. He was our hero. He was one of us – a true grit Canadian."

One of Fox's greatest legacies may well be the inspiration he has given us all in our every day lives. He wanted and succeeded in showing us all, that with determination and effort, we can all accomplish so much more than even we believe we are capable of, and when we face the kind

of obstacles he faced, we should do so with courage and conviction, believing that we can and will succeed. Fox once said, "I guess that one of the most important things I've learned is that nothing is ever completely bad. Even cancer. It's made me a better person. It's given me courage and a sense of purpose I never had before. But you don't have to do like I did... wait until you lose a leg or get some awful disease, before you take the time to find out what kind of stuff you're really made of. You can start now. Anybody can!"

During the past 30 years, there has been an incredible number of people who have participated in the Acton Terry Fox Run, for a variety of reasons. Some have collected pledges and taken part simply to honour Terry Fox, while others do so because they or someone they love have been affected by cancer. When the one you love is taken from you by this insidious disease, you tend to be motivated to do all you can to stop this horrible experience from happening to anyone else. Cancer hurts, and when it is diagnosed, it completely changes, in a heartbeat, the life of the patient as well as family and friends. As Fox said in his letter to the Cancer Society requesting support for his Marathon of Hope, "Somewhere the hurting must stop."

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