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COMMUNITY

Gearing up for weekend walk for cancer cure

By **Stephanie Thiessen**
 CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

When Milton resident Kate Laughland discovered a lump in her breast last year, her doctor told her not to worry about it — she was young and her family had no history of breast cancer.

Fortunately, she didn't listen to him. "I knew something was wrong," Laughland said.

She went to another doctor and found out the lump was cancerous.

Laughland, 43, credits the Milton doctor — who took her suspicions seriously — with saving her life.

The two years before her diagnosis, Laughland had participated in the Weekend to End Breast Cancer, in which participants walk 60 km over two days to raise funds and awareness for Princess Margaret Hospital's breast cancer programs.

Last year though, she couldn't participate as a walker because her mastectomy was scheduled for the following day.

Then, in an even stranger twist, Laughland was diagnosed earlier this year with thyroid cancer. She was operated on last month.

Walk extremely important

Needless to say, after battling cancer twice, Laughland is extremely passionate about this year's walk, which will take place September 8 to 10 in Toronto.

"Having two cancers in one year has been incredibly stressful, but having this event to focus on, and the possibility of helping find a cure one day, keeps me going," she said.

What makes the cause particularly important to her is her 16-year-old daughter, Kelsi Debevec.

"Kelsi has an increased risk now, and I just can't imagine her going through this," said Laughland, who has set a personal fundraising goal of \$5,000.

To show her support, Kelsi, a student at Bishop Reding High School, will be walking alongside her mom in the event as part of their team, 'For the Girls'. The 10-member team has pledged to raise \$50,000.

Kelsi said it's a way she can show her mom she cares. "It's a really hands-on way to help," she said.

A number of Miltonians will participate in next month's walk, joining thousands of other dedicated men and

women taking part in the third annual event.

It's no easy feat. In addition to the grueling physical aspect, which requires months of training, each walker must commit to raising a minimum of \$2,000.

Participants have different motivations for taking part.

The Milton Moms team is made up of 10 local residents, including Joss Johns, Andrea Markusich and Deanna Sellars.

For Johns, it's personal.

"My mother died of bowel cancer, so I know what it's like to lose someone you love who has been taken at far too young by cancer," she said. "I don't want my children or any other children to miss their mothers as I do mine."

She added she believes every fundraising contribution is important, no matter how small.

"It takes many grains of sand to create a beach."

Unique fundraising

The team has come up with a number of creative fundraising ideas, including standing outside the Loblaws store wearing oversized bras and asking for donations "to fill the cups," Sellars said.

Sellars, who has a two-year-old daughter, said her mother-in-law is currently battling cancer and her grandma is a cancer survivor. She doesn't want her daughter to have to struggle with it as well.

Markusich said she was initially hesitant about joining the team, but is glad she did. "Cancer is taking away people we love and enough is enough — this needs to stop."

Tara Groves-Taylor is on the '6 Strong' team, made up of women who've been friends for 15 years. The women decided to band together and participate after one of their friends — who's on the team — was diagnosed with breast cancer.

As the mother of two daughters, Groves-Taylor said she fears for their health and wants to help eradicate cancer.

"I'd love it if they never had to know what breast cancer is," she said.

For more information on the event, to participate in next year's walk or to make an on-line donation to any of the walkers, visit www.endcancer.ca.

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GRAHAM PAINE / CANADIAN CHAMPION

Kelsi Debevec (left) and mother Kate Laughland will be lacing up their running shoes for the Weekend to End Breast Cancer September 8 to 10.

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Programming Schedule — Tuesday, August 29 - Monday, September 4, 2006

Tuesday, August 29	Wednesday, August 30	Thursday, August 31	Friday, September 1	Saturday, September 2	Sunday, September 3	Monday, September 4
8:00am - 9:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 6:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA	8:00am - 1:00pm Plugged In! EXTRA
9:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc) Aug 14	1:00pm Halton Hills Council (cc) Aug 14	1:00pm Milton Council	1:00pm Milton Council	1:00pm Milton Council	6:00pm Milton Council	1:00pm Milton Council
	9:00pm Milton Council	4:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA			9:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA	4:00pm - Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA
	Midnight Plugged In! EXTRA					