

Fighter is remembered

• from HER COURAGE on page 1

Her friends selected two of her favourite songs - *Circle of Life* and *Because You Love Me*, which replaced traditional hymns. "She taught me how to enjoy life," Gareth told mourners. "To me, she was a best friend and a role model."

People who knew Alysia well called her Lou, a lasting nickname her brother Barrett, 21, gave her as a child.

Barrett said he enjoyed a typical sibling relationship with his little sister. The pair had their share of differences like normal brothers and sisters. "But overall we taught each other a lot," he said. "We were always there for each other when times were tough."

Alysia, born in Oakville, learned at a young age how to cope with CF after being diagnosed with the disease at five months.

"It was a shock," Ms Gabriel said. "It was a terrible shock."

The energetic girl decided she wasn't going to let the disease get the better of her and she often spoke at events on behalf of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's Toronto chapter.

She wanted people to know more about the disease in hopes they would jump on the bandwagon to support research efforts to find a cure.

"Her message was always so strong and so honest," said Cindy Berk, executive director of the Toronto chapter.

Her presentations were powerful and full of emotion, added Gareth, who accompanied her to many functions, where she always received standing ovations.

Alysia's crusade almost gave her celebrity status, as she was asked on her 16th birthday to throw the first pitch at SkyDome during the home opener of the Toronto Blue Jays, who support the CF cause.

And last year at a rock concert, Alysia presented flowers to Canadian singer Celine Dion, who's also actively involved in the CF Foundation.

To top it all off, one of Alysia's favourite actors, Tom Hanks, sent her an autographed photo of himself wishing her well.

Alysia never wanted anyone to feel sorry for her, but she wasn't afraid to talk about her battle with CF, said best friend Karen Rintamaki, 16, of Milton.

The pair met in grade 5 at Pineview School in Hornby and both went on to become Milton District High School cheerleaders - a pastime Alysia loved, Karen said.

Alysia led an active life despite daily physiotherapy and antibiotics treatments. She participated in many sports, including skiing and soccer.

She's predeceased by her father Tim, who died of a heart attack in 1991. Alysia was close to her father and missed him greatly, Ms Gabriel said.

In 1992, Ms Gabriel and her two children moved to Milton from their rural home in Halton Hills.

Family and friends will think of Alysia with fond memories, said the teen's favourite uncle, Mark Thornton of Winnipeg.

"She didn't feel sorry for herself and she didn't want people to look at her differently," he said.

Her colleagues at the CF Foundation were shaken up by the news of Alysia's untimely death, said Ms Berk.

"She wondered if she would ever get married and have kids, which really chokes you up a bit. We all wanted her to have the same thing."

Milton native new chair of health association

By BRAD REAUME
The Champion

Old Milton stock has supplied the Nurse Practitioner's Association of Ontario with its next chair.

Carolyn "Cari" Kovachik-MacNeil, who has worked or lectured in the health care field for more than 20 years, was recently elected chair of the association. The new position comes at a time when much in the health care field is in flux.

Ms Kovachik-MacNeil currently lives in northern Milton and is on the board of directors at Credit Valley Hospital in Mississauga. She lectures across the country on her specialty, patient assessment.

Most of her family still resides in Milton. Her

father Victor Kovachik and two brothers Paul and Mike are owners and operators of the Burlington



Carolyn Kovachik-MacNeil

Air Park on Bell School Line. The elder Kovachik worked at one time on the Avro Arrow, a Canadian fighter plane kiboshed for political reasons more than 30 years ago. "I was born and raised in Milton," she said, adding her mother Gwen is a member of the old Milton clan of Stover. "In fact I was born in the old Martin Street Hospital and as a young child lived on Martin

Street right across the street from the Mill Pond."

Fiercely proud of her Milton roots and of her parents and seven siblings, she admitted her parents' determination has rubbed off on her and contributed to her success.

"Because of my parents I was determined to take my nursing to the highest level I could and then give something back as well," she said.

Nurse practitioners have existed in Ontario since 1973, when they were usually posted to remote areas. However, after Ms Kovachik-MacNeil graduated from the McMaster University program in 1983 it was discontinued. The program was recently revived and graduates are expected to be integrated into health care reforms when they are announced by the Ontario government.

• see NEW CHAIR on page 9

—The Canadian Champion, Friday, July 26, 1996

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