

RUNNING FOR ALEX

STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Whitchurch-Stouffville's Todd Zator and son Alex, 15, train for the 26-mile Toronto Marathon. You can support Mr. Zator's run, which benefits the Hospital for Sick Children, by going to www.sickkidsfoundation.com and clicking on the Oct. 14 event. Their goal is to raise \$75,000 for the hospital, whose specialists are credited with saving Alex's life.

Marathoner races with son to thank Sick Kids doctors

BY CHRIS TRABER
Staff Writer

Some sprint from their problems. Todd Zator runs marathons to find solutions.

On Sunday, Oct. 14, the Whitchurch-Stouffville resident will run the 26.2 mile Toronto Marathon, pushing 15-year-old son, Alex, in a special racing stroller.

Their goal is to raise \$75,000 for the Hospital for Sick Children, whose specialists are credited with saving the boy's life.

The father and son team ran the 2003 marathon, collecting \$30,000 for the hospital's research department.

Ten days after they crossed the finish line, Alex underwent two complex but successful spinal surgeries to fully fuse his thoracic spine.

The life-saving procedures halted his rapidly deteriorating scoliosis, which if not corrected, would have resulted in severe compromise of his heart and lungs and eventually death.

Alex was born with campomelic dysplasia, a rare genetic disorder. There are only 100 cases worldwide.

Very little is known about the illness, its cause or cure. The Grade 10 Country Day School student is the oldest of the four cases treated at Sick Kids Hospital.

Many children with this syndrome have severe respiratory problems, which lead to death in infancy.

Alex spent the first four months of his life in hospital and has had numerous surgeries. He has been confined to a wheelchair for several years.

Alex continues to defy the odds, his father said.

"He is an incredible kid with courage beyond his years," Mr. Zator said. "Alex has accepted his disability and lets nothing get in his way."

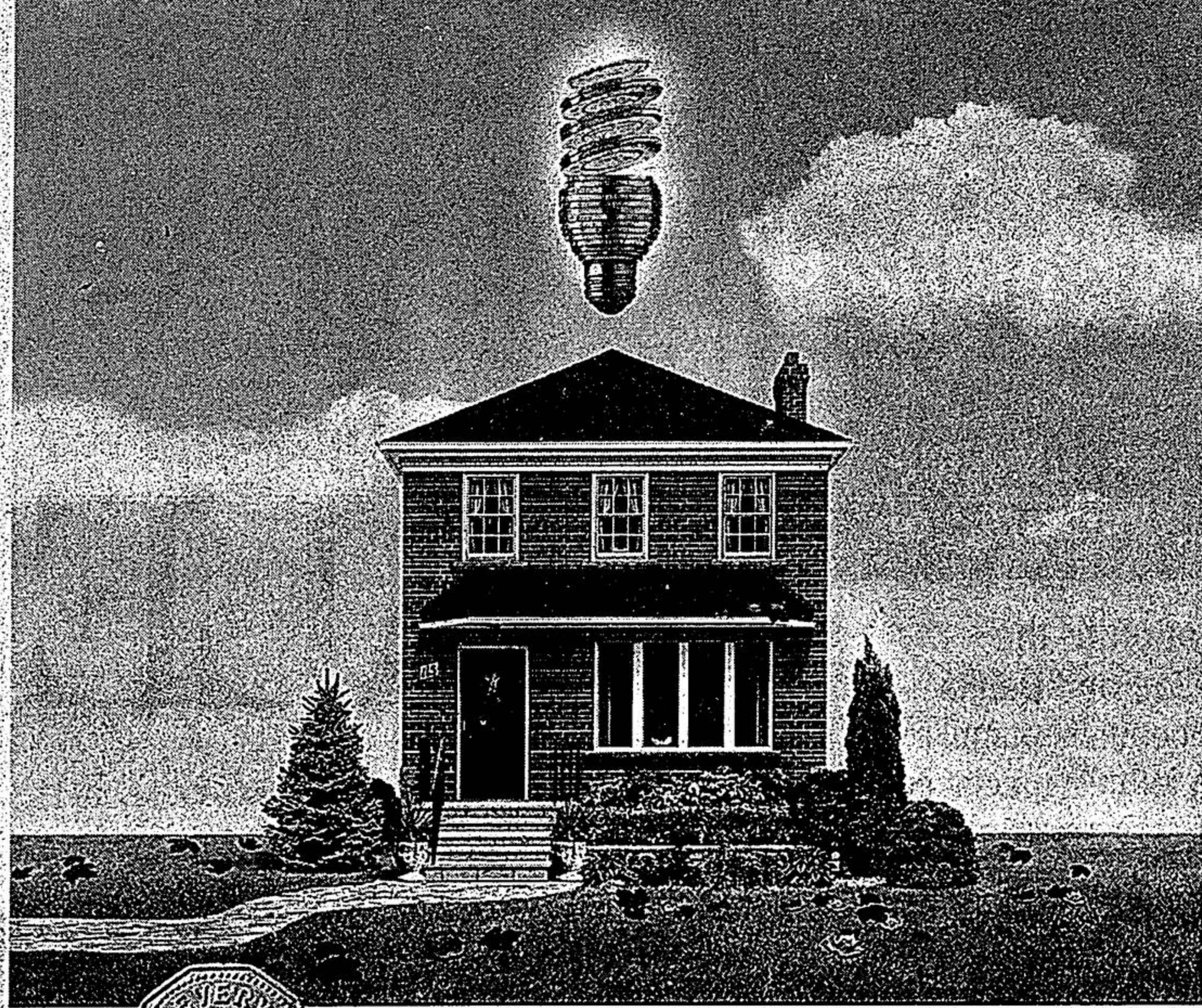
The Zators are participating in this year's marathon to raise money and awareness for Sick Kids Hospital and the research staff.

"The hospital and doctors who have worked with Alex over the past 15 years have been incredibly supportive and clearly should be credited for the way Alex is today," Mr. Zator said.

"Without Sick Kids, Alex wouldn't be here today."

To make a quick, easy and secure online donation, go to www.sickkidsfoundation.com and click on the Oct. 14 event. To donate by cheque, reference it Run with Alex 2007 fund # 8081 and mail to Sick Kids Foundation, 525 University Ave., 14th Fl., Toronto, ON M5G 2L3. You can also donate with a credit card by phone, 416-813-6166 or 1-800-661-1083.

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