

Family's Christmas parade tribute to Sick Kids, son

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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Last year, Ramsey Debaissi was battling the town because his front yard's Christmas light display spilled over onto the boulevard.

At the same time, his young son was battling acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

This year, Debaissi has permission from town staff to go all *Christmas Vacation* on his Reeves Way Boulevard property, as well as hold a parade.

"I wanted to take it to another level," he said.

So far, there are five floats, a donkey dressed up as a reindeer, a DJ and Disney characters taking part in the Dec. 13 parade.

It starts at 5 p.m. and goes for 300 metres along Reeves Way from Richard Underhill Avenue to Joseph Todd Road. The street is south of both Hoover Park Drive and the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library.

Money will be collected along the way for Sick Kids Hospital.

Donations for the Toronto children's hospital will also be accepted in exchange for photographs taken with Santa and hot chocolate.

Last year, Debaissi's home was lit up like the Vegas strip, also to raise money for Sick Kids. His goal was \$5,000 but he ended up raising \$24,500, he said.

This year, he hopes to donate another \$10,000.

Although Debaissi has been working on his house since June, he won't light it up until after the parade.

Debaissi is covering all of the costs associated with decorating his home and hosting the parade and 100 per cent of any money donated will go to Sick Kids, he said.

"They saved my kid's life," Debaissi said of why he is so passionate about fundraising for the Toronto hospital.

"We need to support them because when we need them, they support us. Hopefully we never need Sick Kids, but it's there," he said.

Adrian is now three years old and "doing a lot better. It's a long road ... a bumpy road," Debaissi said, adding Adrian is expected to be in the parade.

Spectators are anticipated to come from as far away as Toronto and Cambridge. Debaissi will also be busing in patients and nurses from Sick Kids.

"We know exactly how it feels to spend Christmas in a hospital," he said.

"Every kid deserves to enjoy something for Christmas."

Volunteers are needed to be Disney characters and he would like more floats. Contact Ramsey Debaissi at 416-887-8305 or lebramsey@hotmail.com



STAFF PHOTO/NICK IWANYSHYN

Adrian Debaissi carries Christmas decorations while his dad, Ramsey, erects others on their Reeves Way Boulevard property in advance of the Reeves Way Christmas parade. They'll host the event to thank Sick Kids hospital, which the family says saved Adrian.

Stouffville Secondary students tops in regional poster contest

The Regional Municipality of York has announced the winners for the 2014 "Ready, Set, Create!" contest.

This contest provides students with an opportunity to select and promote a health related issue that is of concern to them.

This year, there were over 150 submissions with more than 220 students participating.

First place was awarded to the poster by Cheyenne Scott, Cameron Grosse and Elliot Wood, from Stouffville District Secondary School, which uniquely depicted the effects of peer pressure, in terms of alcohol, smoking and drugs, and highlighted the importance of the right to refuse.

Second place winner, Stephanie McNeil

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

from Newmarket High School, created a poster that displayed the difficulties young women face with their body size.

McNeil's poster also outlined that beauty is based on what is within as opposed to what is seen on the outside.

A poster about impaired driving, created by Rachael Daniels from Keswick High School, received third place in the contest. Daniels stated that there is no "Designated Drunk Driver" and highlighted the importance of making the right choice.

The prizes awarded to the winners were \$300, \$200 or \$100 respectively.

York Region is launching a new contest for the 2014/2015 school year. Winners will receive a \$500, \$300 or \$200 gift card respectively.

For contest rules, visit york.ca/readysetchreate. Registration will open in February 2015.

For more information, call York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 or 1-866-252-9933, or visit york.ca/healthyschools.

— Sankavi Naguleswaran

Altmann launching lights for Luca at Boston Pizza

A Stouffville restaurant hopes to light up Luca Gennuso's Christmas.

Little Luca suffered severe damage to his brain's control centre Victoria Day after fall-

ing into a pool being installed at his family's home.

He is undergoing therapy at a Toronto facility.

Boston Pizza is the latest Stouffville enterprise to launch a fundraiser to help the Gennuso family with its expenses.

The restaurant, at Hoover Park Drive and Hwy. 48, has a tree with more than 600 unlit lights on it.

For a \$5 donation, you can light one and help the fund.

Mayor-elect Justin Altmann will officially kick off the fundraiser and light the first bulb tonight at 8 p.m.

More than \$85,000 has been raised for Luca through donations and at fundraisers in Stouffville and beyond.

For more on Luca, including other fundraising efforts, go to: lucaswilltolive.com