



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Stouffville's Theepika Parameshwaran, who died at age eight of a rare cancer last month, will be remembered at an event at the Ballantrae Community Centre this month. Theepi-

ka's family are from left, her father Shanmugaprabha, brother Haresh, 7, mother Pamini and sister Narmada, 10.

# Theepika's family hopes to save others from their pain

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
sbolan@yrmg.com

Less than a month ago, Stouffville's Theepika Shanmugaprabha lost her three-year battle with cancer.

To honour the eight-year-old's memory and spirit as well as to help other children suffering from bone cancer, a fundraiser takes place July 26 from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the Ballantrae Community Centre, 5592 Aurora Rd.

All money raised will be donated to the Osteosarcoma Research Fund at SickKids Hospital.

"We're hoping to make a difference in (a) child's life, that's what our angel Theepika would have wanted – to help people," said her mother, Pamini Shanmugaprabha.

The day-long event includes a barbecue, volleyball, face and nail painting, a photo booth, dunk tank and bouncy castle.

An online fundraising campaign has already raised \$5,620, which surpassed the goal of \$5,000.

Theepika was diagnosed with Ewings Sarcoma in October 2012. She had a small lump on her right arm that looked like nothing more than a small bruise.

Ewings Sarcoma is an aggressive bone cancer most commonly found in 10 to 20-year-olds, but it can afflict someone at any age, according to the Ewings Cancer Foundation of Canada website. It is the second most common form of bone cancer.

Ewings Sarcoma occurs in one out of every 500,000 people under the age of 19, according to the foundation's website.

There is no known cause and it can be misdiagnosed because its symptoms can be mistaken for growing pains or a sports injury, according to the website.

It also spread to her lungs.

"It felt like the whole world shattered. We were in denial and kept wondering, why her," said family members in a video made in Theepika's honour. "How do you have the heart to tell a five-year-old that she is diag-

nosed with cancer? She wouldn't even know what that is."

In Dec. 2012, Theepika had her first round of chemotherapy, along with a 13-hour surgery to remove a bone from her right arm.

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*'How do you have the heart to tell a five-year-old that she is diagnosed with cancer?'*

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Part of Theepika's treatment also included a high dose of chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant at the same time, forcing the little girl into isolation for 45 days.

In the summer of 2013, the tumour was gone and Theepika slowly got to do what all children her age did – go to school and play.

But it was short-lived. A year later, Theepika suffered a relapse and the tumour had spread. It even survived the bone marrow transplant, according to the family video.

This past March, before her final relapse, Theepika took part in the Coast to Coast Against Cancer Foundation's Inside Ride, which supports children with cancer and their families. Her team – The Spinning Wizards – were the top fundraisers with \$3,840.

In May, Million Dollar Smiles surprised Theepika with a back yard playground.

In June, the family found out Theepika's cancer had spread to her head. The doctors said there was nothing more they could do but her family stayed positive and hoped for a miracle, according to the video.

Theepika died in the early morning hours of June 25, while in her parents' arms.

Just weeks later, her family, which includes father Shanmugaprabha Parameshwaran, 42, and siblings Narmada, 10, and Haresh Shanmugaprabha, 7, remain devastated and in denial, according to her mother.

For more information, go to [www.facebook.com/pages/In-Memory-of-Our-Angel-Theepika/822746547832313](http://www.facebook.com/pages/In-Memory-of-Our-Angel-Theepika/822746547832313)