

LUCA DEFIES ODDS

Valentine's Day gala helps cover expensive treatments for youngster

BY SANDRA BOLAN
sbolan@yrmg.com

Luca Gennuso has defied doctors' predictions.

He is not deaf, nor blind and he is starting to eat by mouth.

The three-and-a-half year old is diagnosed as a quadriplegic, but he is able to hold himself up for 20 to 30 seconds at a time.

"That's huge when you have no trunk control," said his father, Daniel.

Luca has also been able to learn how to use click button and eye gaze technologies in order to communicate.

Luca would not be where he is today were it not for the countless hours of specialized therapy he undergoes on a daily basis.

Luca receives advanced bio-mechanical rehabilitation and oxygen therapy seven times a week; orofacial myology swallow therapy as well as conductive education three times a week; neurological physiotherapy twice a week and medic therapy once a week.

Daniel Gennuso and his wife, Laura, have taken an advanced biomechanical rehabilitation program in order to provide Luca more therapy.

Getting Luca to where he is today was also not cheap, as OHIP only pays for some of the therapy.

Since May 2014, when Luca fell into the back yard pool they were having constructed and nearly drowned, Gennuso thinks they have spent more than \$100,000 on Luca's rehab.

'He's doing fantastic and this is why we didn't want to let up on the therapies.

The more you can do, the better his recovery.'

Daniel Gennuso,
Luca's father

This includes a trip to Mexico last year for stem cell therapy.

Following the treatment, he smiled for the first time, according to Gennuso.

They hope to go back in April for another treatment.

"He's doing fantastic and this is why we didn't want to let up on the therapies," Gennuso said.

"The more you can do, the better his recovery," he said.

To help get the family to Mexico, the second annual Love for Luca Valentine's Day gala takes



Luca Gennuso, who nearly drowned in 2014, is undergoing an intensive rehab program.

place Feb. 13 at Thornhill's Le Parc Dining and Banquet Hall.

There is a five-course meal, open bar and antipasto bar. There will also be a live auction, silent auction, raffles and "a lot of special guests," according to Gennuso.

"It's a nice night out ... and at the same time

you're supporting brain injury (research)," he said.

Tickets are \$100 each for adults and \$35 for kids. Children three and under are free. Tickets are already about two-thirds sold out. For tickets and more information, email love4luca@outlook.com or call 647-982-3212.



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

Sweta Pahirathan dances during the celebration of Tamil month at town hall last week.

Tamils celebrating this month

Whitchurch-Stouffville council has declared January as Tamil Heritage Month.

"It is significant for us. It is important for us, recognition for the Tamil community, for the language to be recognized," said Sivan Ilangko, founder of the annual Tamil heritage month celebrations, as well as the founding director of the Stouffville Multicultural Association.

He has no data, but Ilangko has a "gut feeling" there are more than 2,000 Tamils living in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

Outside of Sri Lanka, Canada has the largest population of Sri Lankan Tamils, according to Ilangko.

Tamils felt discriminated and marginalized after the Sri Lankan Civil War, according

to Ilangko, which is why being recognized in Canada and by town council is so significant.

Councillors celebrated with members of the Tamil community at the municipal offices during a reception last week.

On Jan. 29, the third annual Tamil Heritage Month Celebrations takes place at Stouffville District Secondary School, 801 Hoover Park Dr., from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. Admission is free. There will be cultural programming and Tamil food.

About 300 people are expected to attend.

RSVP by calling: Sivan Ilangko (416-707-9104), Pat Kandiah (416-883-5802) or Theva Somasundaram (416-708-6250).

— Sandra Bolan



STOUFFVILLE BASEBALL ASSOCIATION

Is excited to announce that registration is now open online at
<http://www.stouffvilleyankeesbaseball.com/>

For any questions please e-mail us at info@stouffvilleyankeesbaseball.com

Live registration will also take place at the Stouffville Arena:

January 23rd, January 30th, February 6th & February 13th 8am - 12pm.

Register now to secure your spot for an amazing season of FUN!!!

