



SANDY SCHELL KENNEDY SETS FOR HER LAST RUN

Stouffville Terry Fox Run Chair Leaves Legacy of Fund Raising Success Through Community Involvement

By Bruce Stapley

Sandy Schell Kennedy is hanging them up after a 25 year run that has brought unimaginable success to her cause as well as accolades to her community.

Sandy will step down as Chair of the Stouffville Terry Fox Run following this year's event Sunday September 20. Since taking on her position in 1990, funds raised for cancer research by the Stouffville run have catapulted from \$10,400 in her inaugural year to \$122,000 for the 2014 event, placing Stouffville sixth out of 220 communities across Ontario. The Town has now contributed \$1.593 million to the \$650 million that has been raised Canada wide since the inaugural run in 1982.

Sandy and her husband Richard are planning to move to their cottage near Coboconk. As she gets set to pass the baton she maintains the continued success of the Stouffville run depends upon people being willing to give of their time despite busy schedules. "We have a great team in Stouffville. But we're always looking for more people to get involved," she said. "We realize that people's time is tight. The new generation coming along now don't have the time my generation had. But we'll take small parts."

Sandy's participation in the Terry Fox Run stems from her admiration for Terry as he set off to cross Canada on his Marathon of Hope in the spring of 1980. "I followed Terry every day, coming home from work at night to watch him on the news. Terry was a year younger than me and I had a real affinity for him, what he was trying to accomplish."

Sadly, she never got to see Terry Fox in person. "I was in a meeting the day he ran by my office. If there is one regret in my life that is it."

Like everyone else in Canada, Sandy remembers where she was when she heard the shattering news that Terry's cancer had returned to his lungs, ending

his run in Thunder Bay after covering 3,339 miles in 143 days. "I was driving home from work. I had to pull over. It was kind of my JFK moment, a defining moment in my life."

Thirty five years later Sandy feels that despite the national devastation felt after Terry Fox's affliction and subsequent death in 1981, the fact that his initial goal to raise \$24 million (a dollar for every Canadian in 1980) has been surpassed by \$625 million would have made him think it was worth it. "Terry would say he did have a happy ending. He wouldn't say it was a tragedy."

Sandy said it was her own family's experiences with cancer that convinced her she should take over as Chair of the Stouffville Terry Fox Run when she was approached in 1990. "Dixie Sellers, Beulah King and my mother were all stepping down and they needed someone to take this on. My nephew Jeremy Schell was diagnosed with cancer of the kidney at the age of 18 months. He spent a lot of time at Sick Kids Hospital and lost a kidney."

Jeremy survived, proving there is hope for anyone afflicted with cancer. "Today he's a healthy, handsome 27 year old," Sandy said.

Sandy is adamant that the fact cancer hits with such randomness makes it something we should all join together to fight. "There isn't a family that has escaped cancer. Yet more and more people are surviving. Yes, some are still dying. I lost my mother-in-law when she was diagnosed in the hospital and died three weeks later. But more people are surviving."

She said the importance of fund raising for cancer research is vital because there are so many forms of the disease. "Cancer is not just one disease. It's 200 hundred diseases."

The national theme for this year's Terry Fox Run is *A Dream As Big As Our Country*. With the rapid growth experienced by Whitchurch-Stouffville in recent years, the Stouffville Run committee is trying to reach out to the Town's newcomers. "We are opening our arms to our new community," said

Sandy. "We are delivering 2,000 information sheets to the new subdivisions. The are translated into five languages on the back, which was done by the Stouffville Multicultural Association."

While promotional materials and pledge sheets are provided by the national association, Sandy said the fact that her committee works with a zero budget speaks volumes for the Stouffville community. "Our volunteers pay their own cost; all expenses such as policing are born by others. The Town has been very helpful, and the local media have been supportive in getting the word out."

While Sandy is hopeful the weather will cooperate for this year's run as it usually does, she pointed out that Terry Fox endured everything from cold, snow and rain through blistering heat during his trek. "We still need you to be there if it isn't good weather. Cancer doesn't have an umbrella."



Sandy Schell Kennedy saw funds raised for cancer research go from \$10,400 in 1991 to \$122,000 during her 25 years as Chair of the Stouffville Terry Fox Run.



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