

Get your rear at next week's Push for your Tush



By Brock Weir

Losses often bring families closer together, but after Tanya Shepherd lost her battle with colon cancer in November of 2009, it brought her family not only closer together with a common purpose, but introduced them to what has become a tight-knit community of people who have followed a similar journey.

These people, however, are not sitting around on their duffs. Once again, they getting warmed up and getting their running shoes on for next Saturday's Push for Your Tush. The annual fundraiser for Colon Cancer Canada gets underway Saturday, June 21, on the grounds just north of the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, with registration beginning at 2 p.m. Feet hit the surrounding trails beginning at 4.15 p.m. for a 1k toddler walk, a 5k walk, and a 10k run.

Held in Tanya's honour, this event is once again spearheaded by 'Tanya's Tushies', of which Tanya's family are proud members.

Kathy Cartan, Tanya's mother-in-law, says their endeavours started out to raise not just funds but, perhaps more importantly, awareness for colon cancer. Tanya founded the team for a previous fundraiser called the Underwear Affair, ultimately raising \$30,000 on her own. When that event folded, they looked for other ways to honour her memory.

'When she lost her battle with colon cancer in November of 2009, we vowed she would never be forgotten and we would continue to fight against colon cancer forever and organized our own walk with Colon Cancer Canada in Aurora,' says Kathy. 'What we were trying to do was take something that was really, really bad and do some good stuff with it. Our family's philosophy is very much about making the world a better place and giving back to the community.'

'We feel like we are doing something and it teaches all of our children to volunteer as well.'

Tanya's son Jack has grown up with the Aurora Push for Your Tush event and although it has always been a personal event for them, Kathy says seeing the next generation getting involved really serves to drive home this point.

Since their first Tush Push in 2008, they have raised over \$20,000.

'It is a really heartwarming day. It brings out kids in strollers, families and dogs, and people are walking for people who have lost their battle, walking for people who are presently fighting it, and it is awesome because all of the survivors have a blue shirt,' says Kathy.

Their philosophy is that this event is not just about the money or raising funds, it is about inviting people out to make a difference. Hopefully the money follows, she says, and it usually does ? and when it does it is still something of a ?mindblower? for her. Case in point: last year's event was somewhat marred by bad weather, but they still pulled in \$48,000 for the foundation.

?It is hard to believe it when I say it, because we have raised a significant amount of money, but for us it is all about the awareness,? she says. ?Colon cancer is 90 per cent beatable if caught early. If people get checked, you still hear people say that once you hit 50 you should ask your doctor to get checked. You should ask a lot sooner than that. Tan was only 28 and once they discovered it, it was stage four and already too late.?

For more information about Push for Your Tush Aurora, visit www.pushforyourtush.ca and click on ?Aurora, ON?.