

Aurora High students set \$50,000 Relay goal



By Brock Weir

Aurora's Relay for Life might be heading north to Newmarket next month, but Aurora High School (AHS) students are stepping up to make sure the celebratory nature of the annual fundraiser for the Canadian Cancer Society remains alive and well.

Students have set a \$50,000 fundraising goal for the May 27 event, which will transform their school fields into a place of commemoration and celebration, with fun and games ongoing throughout the 12 p.m. to 12 a.m. event, and a moving tribute to local residents who have fought cancer, who are all invited to come and take part in the traditional Survivors' Lap.

"When I was a kid, cancer always brought us together for all the wrong reasons," says Grade 12 student Lukas Camick. "When we started to [Relay] at the school, we turned it around so we're coming together for a good cause. It is not because somebody is dying, we're trying to prevent that."

This is not the first year AHS has hosted a Relay for Life event and, when the event used to be held in Aurora, there was strong representation on that field from various teams from the school. As such, many of the students behind this month's event are old hands at fundraising and have seen their efforts blossom with each passing year.

"I have participated in Relay as a volunteer for many years, so I definitely see the impact Relay has had on the community, which has been great, and I really want to continue that at our school," says Hannah Lang, who recently lost a family friend to the disease soon after it was diagnosed. "I am really supporting fundraising for people to be diagnosed earlier so these things can be prevented."

This was a view shared by fellow student Chen Liu. He says he Relays to raise awareness of the severity of cancer and to underscore the statistic that an average of one in three Canadians will get cancer at some point during their lifetime.

"That is a pretty big number," he says. "I think it is important that people realise the money going to fight cancer and research is very, very beneficial to people down the road."

The Grade 12 students kicked off their Relay for Life Campaign at the end of March with a "Relay Rally" to "pump up" the school, explains Sally Falk. Each year, Relay brings up a "rollercoaster of emotion" for students but, so far, one third of the school has signed up to take part -- a positive sign they are going to hit their ambitious fundraising goal.

"We are confident we're going to be able to reach that \$50,000 by the time of the event," says Declan Johnston. "We have seen lots of students going in and out to fundraise and we're looking forward to seeing those numbers come back in because I think it is going to be really impressive. We're asking each student to fundraise \$100 and I am sure we're going to have tons of students who are

going to go above and beyond that.

?I have participated in Relay for a couple of years now and I have just always been blown away by the power of the event itself. I just think the opportunity to bring it to our school is just so amazing. It is an opportunity to go out of high school with a bang and really make a difference at the end. I lost my grandmother almost 10 years ago now and she is always at the back of my mind when I am doing these things and it makes me motivated to put together a really good event.?

If you would like to help the graduating organizers truly go out with a bang and meet these goals, there are a number of ways you can help along the way. Although the event itself is primarily for the AHS community, you can make donations to the school, team or individual of your choice by visiting relayforlife.ca/aurorahs.

Additionally, any Aurora residents who have been directly impacted by cancer are invited to get in touch with the school by emailing aurorahighrelay@gmail.com as soon as possible to participate in the Survivors' Lap.