

AHS gets ready for "party with a purpose"



By Brock Weir

A sudden electrical storm last year didn't keep Aurora High School's inaugural Relay for Life down.

This year, the students have regrouped, re-organized, and are determined to help kick cancer's ass with a vengeance and nearly 430 pairs of feet prepared to do the kicking.

The teens, along with staff advisor Kerin Harding, are putting the finishing touches on the second annual event, which will take place next Thursday, May 26 from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on the school's back field.

"It's a party with a purpose," says Grade 12 student Hannah Lang, noting they have once again set themselves the challenge of raising \$50,000 for the Canadian Cancer Society. "This isn't our first event anymore so we actually know what we're doing and we were able to start with the foundation from last year. One of the biggest things that happened this year through the Canadian Cancer Society was they switched everything over to online this year for registration. They are making a big push towards fundraising online because statistics show that in-person is a \$20 per person donation, but online it is a \$50 average. It has definitely helped this year because we're already at almost \$25,000!"

Earlier in the school year, two of the teens who had brought in the most money received an extra incentive, with the two top fundraisers, both Grade 9 students, receiving coveted tickets to a Hedley concert in Toronto. Without them knowing this was a prize waiting for them, there was a huge buzz in the school when the winners were announced over the P.A. system.

"Hedley has been associated with the Canadian Cancer Society and they wanted to be able to do a school performance for a school that had reached a certain goal early, but the timing was just off," explains Ms. Harding. "Hedley still wanted to contribute so they offered up these tickets for the two top fundraisers at each school to go to the concert when they played the Air Canada Centre."

"It was awesome," adds Hannah. "I was in calculus and everyone was really excited and really jealous. It was really awesome they were both Grade Nines and it was really cool to see it as someone who did it last year."

According to Grade 11 student Heba Shahaed, Registration Chair for this year's Relay, they have spent a good portion of the year examining incentives to get people engaged in Relay for Life and what it is all about.

?Just recently, when we hit \$20,000, we had free popcorn we were giving out to everyone,? she says. ?We have had small events throughout the year and [on Friday] we had Coffee for a Cause where Starbucks donated coffee and refreshments and we had homemade baked goods. People were able to do that and it contributed to the total amount of our school. Once people raise \$30,000, we will be having a buy-out during periods Four and Five where people can buy out of class and we're going to have a movie in the cafeteria. It encourages people to fundraise and make it a fun experience for everyone.?

Over halfway towards their goal and nearly double last year's registrants, Aurora High students are already well on their way, but could also use a boost from the community.

After the Canadian Cancer Society combined Aurora's Relay with Newmarket's, Aurora High School now represents the only Relay for Life in Town that is sticking to the original concept of the 12-hour relay, and members of the community are stepping up to the plate, with Powell Contracting donating the equivalent of \$10,000 worth of fencing to keep participants safe and secure during the evening hours, Moksha Yoga being on hand to keep the students on their feet, and M&M Meats to keep them well-fuelled.

Organizers, however, would be thrilled if more local businesses came out to support their efforts through sponsorship and product donations ? even bottled water.

Of course, students invite members of the community who are battling ? or have won the battle ? with cancer to come out to the event to be saluted during the annual Survivor's Lap.

For more information on this year's event, and to contribute to their efforts, visit relayforlife.ca/aurorahs.