

AHS' Relay for Life efforts zero in on \$40,000 to fight cancer



By Brock Weir

Dressed in distinctive yellow t-shirts, a handful of cancer survivors led their way around the Aurora High School track on Wednesday night, guests of honour at the school's Relay for Life celebration.

Halfway through the Survivors' Lap, the skies opened up. Torrential downpours soaked the survivors and students and suddenly strong, gusty winds scattered the tents they had set up to make the say a success. Briefly breaking up to catch and re-tether their belongings, the soggy teens returned to the sidelines of the track, barely distracted the weather around them. They had a job to do.



And seconds after the above photo was taken...

As the survivors made their final turn, the students lined their path, applauding them, high-fiving them, and cheering them onto the finish line. After all, they represent the reason 15 AHS students pooled their energies to keep Relay for Life alive in Aurora, with a \$50,000 fundraising goal to benefit the Canadian Cancer Society.

"The Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life is a celebration of survival, a tribute to the lives of loved ones and a night of fun, friendship and fundraising to help beat cancer," said Sally Falk, media chair of the AHS event. "Everyone here has made his or her commitment to fight against cancer. You have collected pledges which will help the Society to continue to lead the fight against cancer by funding research on all forms of cancer, provide incredible information on cancer, its treatment, risk prevention, and [its providing of] support programs for people living with cancer, their family and friends."

Added Declan Johnston, co-organizer of the event: "Today we will share many moments together. We will cheer and celebrate cancer survivors, provide hope and inspiration for those living with the disease, and even shed tears together as we remember and honour love ones who have lost the battle together."

Traditionally, Relay for Life is a 12-hour event running from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., with a variety of activities planned to keep everyone energized throughout the long haul, but Aurora High School students retooled the format to begin at 12 noon, running until 12 midnight.

Joining the teens at the opening ceremonies were Mayor Geoff Dawe and Councillor John Abel who provided words of encouragement. Both men were involved with Aurora's Relay for Life when it was held at the Magna Campus on Wellington Street East through last June. This year, Aurora's Relay has merged with Newmarket and will be held Friday, June 19, at Pickering College.

"I want to thank you all for coming out," said Mayor Dawe. "I would like to thank you for your dedication to helping raise funds to fight cancer. I don't know anybody who hasn't been affected in one way or another by cancer, so what you're doing is really important. It is also a great opportunity for you to maybe get to know some other people in the school you haven't had an opportunity to meet, or get to know that well."

From the field packed with teams dressed in distinctive costumes to set them apart from the rest, to the collective dash to move everything inside to the gymnasium to carry on without missing a beat when the weather was most inclement, the group certainly got to know each other under trying circumstances ? and raising a significant amount of money for the Canadian Cancer Society in the process.

For more information on the 2015 Newmarket Relay For Life, including how to sign up and make a pledge to an individual or team, visit www.relayforlife.ca/newmarket.