

Aurora students raise thousands in Relay for Life triple



By Brock Weir

Like beacons through the night, the yellow shirts of survivors led the way for hundreds of students under cloudy skies on Friday morning as they walked in solidarity to make a difference.

As students at ESC Renaissance prepared to set off on their 12 hour Relay for Life, they were inspired by the moving words of Manon La Brecque, a breast cancer survivor and co-founder of York Region's Dragonfly Wellness Retreat and, together, they set off to raise thousands of dollars for the Canadian Cancer Society.

Relay for Life is the Canadian Cancer Society's biggest annual fundraiser and while the Aurora-wide Relay may be a thing of the past, local students continue to step up to the plate to help fill the void for the charity.

ESC Renaissance's Relay for Life was the third of three held at local high schools last week, each spearheaded by eager groups of senior students looking to have an impact on their community.

Joining the cause for the first time this year was Cardinal Carter Catholic High School on Thursday.

'This is our first year running the event, so we really didn't know what to expect,' said Grade 12 student Matt Parkin on behalf of the committee. 'We started the planning process at the end of February and there were 15 of us working together to plan the event. We started a fundraising goal of 250 participants and \$2,500 and we happily exceeded that at \$2,700 and over 275 participants' on the field.'

The Cardinal Carter community decided to throw their energy into Relay after fellow Grade 12 student Alex, an area fundraiser for the Canadian Cancer Society, made the pitch to his peers.

'I approached our Student Council and our Athletic Council, we went to the admin and got it running and thought, every other school is doing it, so why shouldn't we? We said [to students], 'Hey, we want to make a difference in the school community and, if we put in the work, the results will come,' and we were able to pull it off.'

Participating students kept busy during the 12 hour fundraiser holding Zumba classes, yoga sessions and impromptu soccer games, along with face painting, lip synch battles, and more.

At the end of the day, however, it was all about the cause and for the Grade 12s to leave a legacy at Carter.

'I am hoping this will be the first of many years to come,' said Matt. 'Honestly, if you put your mind to it, you can do anything. For myself, a couple of weeks ago, we only had 25 people registered and then we had 250 people ' just to a school-wide event put on by the 10 or 15 of us.'

Thursday was also a moving morning for Susan Cadorette.

When Aurora High School last held its own Relay for Life in 2016, Ms. Cadorette had the honour of leading the way as part of the survivor's lap. At the time, she had recently returned to Aurora High School after successfully battling breast cancer.

This time, fully back in action at AHS, she was proud to take on the role of staff advisor to the students' organizing committee.

'They have been phenomenal organizers, you guys have just been unbelievable,' Ms. Cadorette told committee member Lindsay MacPherson, wiping away a tear.

Lindsay told The Auroran they had been working on their Relay since November and, after a two year hiatus, they were 'really excited' to get back into gear.

'Seeing it all come together is awesome,' said Lindsay. 'I want students to realise how important an experience Relay is, the message behind it, and to also have fun. I want them to get into the spirit.'