

CDS honour Terry Fox and one of its own with a splash of colour



By Jake Courtepatte

While every Canadian family has been touched by cancer, the Country Day School family found this year's run to hit especially close to home.

Last school year, Grade 6 student James Eacock was diagnosed with a brain tumour, undergoing surgery followed by extensive chemotherapy at the Hospital for Sick Children.

And what better way to show their support than for the CDS community to dedicate this year's Terry Fox Run to James and his battle.

‘It didn't take a lot,’ said Ann Wildberger, Director of the Junior School at CDS. ‘Everyone in the school really got into it, really brought it together.’

James's mother Alison was a surprise guest speaker at the Junior Assembly on the sunny Tuesday morning.

‘It was incredible,’ said Kim Sillcox, director of external communications. ‘She just shared her personal story; it was very heartfelt and meaningful.’

Sillcox said the speech was especially moving for the students.

‘Aside from a handful of new kids, everyone knows James, and what he was going through last spring. So it was quite a moving experience.’

With James as inspiration, CDS student council looked to bring the student body together in spectacular fashion. And a massive group hug fit the bill.

All 710 students took part in a ‘group hug’ behind the school in the afternoon, forming a heart-shape with arms wrapped around each other.

‘The hug wasn't a sad moment,’ said Wildberger. ‘It was actually one of hope. I think that's the story of Terry Fox, one of hope. And the expression of love for James is one of hope as well.’

The inspiration for the hug came from ‘Megan's Walk,’ a five-kilometre walk founded 13 years ago by a mother who lost her daughter to cancer.

The day continued with a colourful twist on the traditional Terry Fox Run – a ‘Colour Run,’ held for the Middle and Senior schools throughout the 100-acre campus.

According to CDS, Colour Runs are meant to celebrate healthiness and happiness.

They wanted to do something different, said Sillcox. The student council wanted to end the day on a fun and happy note, and leave everyone with a smile on their face.

Perhaps the most touching moment of the day came after the run had ended, when Alison, Wildberger, and some of James's friends spoke with James via Facetime at SickKids.

Just to hear him, and hear his voice, and see his face, it was so worth it, said Wildberger. He's just a little boy. He's been with our school since Grade 1, so for him to still be involved in Terry Fox Day this year was so special.

The Country Day School truly is James's second family. After the diagnosis, the school was the second call made by the family.

His classmates have had his back throughout the entire ordeal, said Wildberger. Many of the children have journeyed with him since Grade 1.

It's important that James keeps his connection with the school. We felt we had to honour this boy, the journey he's been through. When James was in the building, all of his classmates would be happy.