

ESC Renaissance takes to the catwalk with message of hope



By Brock Weir

Students at ESC Renaissance put on their designer duds and polished off their talents this month to help send a message of hope to the community.

Each year, Renaissance, the Catholic French-language high school on the northwest corner of Bloomington Road and Bathurst Street, puts on the extravaganza for a different selected charity. More often than not, proceeds from the annual event have benefited cancer charities in the name of students and faculty who are bravely battling the disease.

This year, however, they took to the runway to raise money for the Canadian Mental Health Association in memory of one of their fellow students who lost his battle with depression this winter.

That student was Alexander Roy-Lachapelle. The Grade 12 student died this January on the GO Tracks just north of St. John's Sideroad.

His parents, Richard and Marsha, were on hand for the event (pictured above, second left) as students helped make a tangible difference for those who might be living with mental disorders, and all too often suffering in silence.

"The message I would like to convey to you is one of hope," said Richard, addressing the audience at the school. "Hope can come in many shapes and forms. Dear Parents: the Parade of Hope that you are about to witness will only reinforce what you already know: that your children have many talents and that they are very generous. Your children are your hopes and dreams for the future."

Mental health problems can take many shapes and forms and, he said, can strike those least expecting it. Hope, he added, can also be something that can quickly be lost.

"My wife Marsha and I probably will never know what caused our dear son Alex to lose hope and compelled him to take his life three months ago, on the morning of January 14," he said. "Our lives have been forever devastated and we are now picking up the scattered pieces of our shattered lives and trying, as best we can, to rebuild our lives without Alex. Things will never be the same as before."

"However, despite all the trials and tribulations one encounters in one's life, one must never lose hope. Hope can also be something that can be passed on from one person to another. Kind gestures [from our friends, family, the school, our church and Bereaved Families of Ontario - York Region] have helped us and continue to help us and have allowed us to keep up hope despite the darkness surrounding us."

Concluding his remarks with a quote from his favourite movie, *The Shawshank Redemption*, Mr. Lachapelle said, "Hope is a good

thing. Maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies.?