

?Feisty Flamingos? get fancy for Friday?s Relay for Life



By Brock Weir

Hundreds of walkers, and supporters are due to descend on Magna International this Friday for Aurora's Relay for Life 2014, which runs from 7 p.m. June 6 through 7 a.m. June 7.

As teams gather, rain or shine, on the lawns of the Wellington Street campus, they do so to remember, but also have fun in solidarity raising money to help make cancer history.

Aurora's ?Feisty Cancer Fighting Flamingos? don't have far to go when the event gets underway at 7 p.m. The team of seven, made up of Russ Cooray, Alan Higgins, Eileen Indos, Stephanie Maly, Bianca Osorio, Holly Piotrowski, and team captain Lisbeth Goodyear, base themselves at Magna where the employees use their captive audience to raise some much needed funds from fellow Magna employees.

At press time, the Flamingos had flocked together to raise nearly \$1,400 for the charity and they have their sights set on much more to come.

The Flamingos aren't just mere fundraisers. As co-hosts of the annual event, each year they put on their pink finery to give the place a proper decorating job before Relay-goers begin to arrive.

?It is fun when we all get together and decorate,? says Ms. Piotrowski. ?It is very communal. There are people from all different walks of life, high school students who just raise phenomenal amounts of money every year, but it is also very emotional with the luminaries. You see people of all ages grieving and celebrating because there are a lot of success stories now versus what they used to be. It is like one big happy family.?

And each Flamingo has their own story of what brings them out each year over the past five years to partake in this communal atmosphere.

?I am doing this in memory of my grandmother who died of cancer,? says Mr. Cooray, adding his father also had an incurable blood disorder. ?I am going to do my best to help out.?

Ms. Maly relays in memory of her sister-in-law, and also a very good friend of hers. Ms. Indos has also had many family members who have lived with cancer. Some have beaten the disease, but others have not.

?It is in memory of them, but it is also to give back to the community,? she says. ?It has been a good eye-opener, I think in terms of how the funds are needed.?

The team likens Mr. Higgins to Forrest Gump in that when he starts to walk, there is no stopping him. He says he walks in memory of four family members who lost their battles with cancer.

'I was hoping to get involved, participate, and raise money to find a cure and also [raise awareness] that people should get their bodies checked out,' he says. 'People say, 'Oh, I'm fine!' but when they get it checked out, it is too late. People need to be more aware.

'I have been doing this for the last five years and I can see how people have focused on the loss of their family members and friends, but it is good to see how they cope with it, remember the good times and not the bad times.'

At the end of the 12 hour relay, each team member leaves with a sense of accomplishment and seeing the sun rise near the end really drives home what this is all about.

At press time, the Aurora Relay has raised over \$61,000. For more information, visit www.relayforlife.ca/aurora.