

Williams? students plan something extra special for ?Something for Sarah?



By Brock Weir

Getting your cheeks pinched is something teenagers usually try to avoid, but having your cheeks swabbed? There better be a good reason.

Last year, students at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School found that very reason in Sarah Watkin. Inspired by the six-year-old's struggle with leukemia and finding a bone marrow donor, the students put their heads together and came up with a bone marrow clinic, inviting members of the school communities to open up, get swabbed, and add themselves to the list of possible bone marrow matches.

Based on their success last year, these tenacious students are thinking bigger ? making it a community affair both inside the walls of Williams and out into greater Aurora.

Students are spearheading Something for Sarah, their continued efforts for Sarah and her family. Events get off to an early start next Thursday, February 6, at Boston Pizza at First Commerce Drive and Wellington Street East when students hit Boston Pizza, don their aprons and become celebrity servers for the evening.

From 6 ? 9 p.m., 10 per cent of all receipts will go towards the Williams' Something for Sarah campaign. The main event, however, unfolds within the school itself on February 13. For \$25 per ticket, students, teachers, and the community at large can expect ?lots of finger foods, a student art show, live music, children's games,? and, of course, the bone marrow clinic, with all proceeds benefiting the Watkin Family.

?The entire community is invited to this event, so we want to make it great for all ages and not just high school students,? says Grade 11 student Kianna Gram. ?We're really pushing for it to be successful. You get food, kids games and there is going to be live music, a student art show set up in the library and it will be great for the community.?

The students don't have a particular goal in mind for the event, and view everything that comes in as a bonus as it goes directly to a family in need.

?We just want to try as much as we can and whatever we end up with, we know at the end of the day we will have put in as much effort as we possibly could,? says Grade 12 student Sydney Cobbold. ?Whether five people come or whether 500 people come, I will be completely happy because I know people will have come together and done a great job.?

The plight of Sarah and her family was first brought to the attention of students last year by teachers as her father is a member of the York Region District School Board. They say they were inspired not only by their story, but in the spirit and determination in which

they have faced their challenge.

‘She has just inspired us so much,’ says Sydney. ‘When I met her dad, he was the most outgoing, bubbly, nice person and it is just so hard to believe that at the same time, that was happening. He could put down a few hours [to be with us] and really inspired us as a team to definitely do the best we can.’

Adds Kianna: ‘Her family always posts photos to Sarah’s Facebook page and you can see her personality. She is always goofy. There was one where she was riding this scooter through Sick Kids and it was just the cutest thing I have ever seen. She is always happy despite her situation and she is making the best out of everything.’

The situation also hits particularly close to home for Grade 11 student Haven Moulds, as a family member is also struggling with cancer. Her grandmother is, of course, of a different generation to Sarah but with that age comes support from friends and others who have gone through similar journeys. The same can’t often be said of young children with cancer in finding that person to relate to on their own level.

‘It is almost as if they are going through this alone, even if they do have quite a bit of support,’ says Haven.

As they spend just over a week putting the finishing touches on these two community events, the students are looking forward to them with an equal mix of excitement and trepidation.

‘It feels so unreal now and almost as if this day is never going to happen, but when the day comes it is just going to be an amazing night,’ says Sydney. ‘Our school has never done something like this before. It is my last year here too, so it is really sad, but I am so excited I am going to be able to put something like this together with some of the greatest friends I have met and people I have really grown to love.’

Adds Kianna: ‘We are so proud of this! It is our baby!’

For more on the Something for Sarah events being held by Dr. G.W. Williams students, including ways to purchase tickets for the February 13 event, visit somethingforsarah.wix.com/gwilliams.