

2017 Dufferin Relay for Life to be hosted at ODSS



By Mike Pickford

With the warm weather hopefully sticking around throughout the remaining spring and summer months, many local organizations are looking forward to hosting their seasonal outdoor fundraisers, but perhaps none quite as big, or quite as emotional as the upcoming Dufferin Relay for Life.

Now entering its seventh year in the community, Dufferin Relay for Life has taken on a new meaning for many area residents in 2017 following the untimely passing of former Orangeville District Secondary School (ODSS) principal Darryl Kirkland in January. In a fitting tribute to the long-time local educator the event will take place at ODSS this year, rather than its previous setting in the Orangeville Fairgrounds.

Now a global movement with events in more than 20 countries and more than \$4 billion raised for cancer research, Relay For Life traces its origins to May 1965 when Dr. Gordon Klatt, a colorectal surgeon from Tacoma, Washington, decided he wanted to raise money for the American Cancer Society. Because he enjoyed marathons, he walked around a track at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma for 24 hours. Throughout the night, friends paid \$25 to run or walk 30 minutes with him. He walked about 83 miles and raised \$27,000 for cancer research.

Launched in 1999, the Dufferin relay is part of the Canadian Cancer Society's premier fundraising event, with all funds raised going towards supporting those battling the disease and researching for a cure. Last year, the Canadian organization held 432 events across the country, raking in an unprecedented \$28 million. In Orangeville, roughly 180 participants came together to raise over \$79,000. With a strong ODSS presence anticipated this year and a more central location for area residents, local teacher Janine Grin is expecting the 2017 Dufferin Relay for Life to be the best the community has seen yet.

?I don't think there could be a more perfect way for Relay to happen this year than to get a big group of people together on site here at ODSS and just do as good a job as we possibly can in raising money for cancer research,? Ms. Grin said.

?I know Darryl was personally very excited that Relay was going to be hosted here this year, I remember a conversation we had in November of last year where he took me on a walk and told me that this needs to be the best year yet.?

She added, ?So this is a huge year for us. We want to do Darryl proud and make sure our tribute is very meaningful.?

Taking place on June 9 from 6 p.m. to midnight, the event will feature various themed laps throughout the course of the evening, along with a potential karaoke contest, games for children, face painting and a decked out obstacle course. Hoping to attract between 250 and 300 participants this time around, Ms. Grin is aiming for what she sees as an achievable goal of \$60,000 raised.

?That's our goal every year for this Relay, but I'm definitely hoping to get over that mark this year. We're going to have a lot of people out there participating and so the more money we can raise the better,? Ms. Grin said.

A good chunk of that total is expected to come from the staff team ODSS has submitted once again this year. In what will be their fourth straight participating, Janine expects they should be able to round up roughly \$10,000.

?Since 2013, we've had six people affiliated with ODSS diagnosed with cancer who are currently cancer-free. Then we've had three people start their battles since 2013 and not make it, with our former principal Darryl Kirkland being the more recent one,? Ms. Grin said. ?Cancer is something that touches everybody in some form or another throughout your lifetime and so this is a way to give back and honour those that we've lost, while also offering encouragement and support to those still fighting.?

She added, ?We're incredibly proud to be able to host this great event at ODSS this year. Hopefully we can raise a ton of money to

go towards research and to help those still fighting and those not yet diagnosed that will, one day, need to fight. This is a big, big event.?

For more information on the Dufferin Relay for Life, visit convio.cancer.ca.