

Bancroft Crusaders raise \$51,000+ during Relay for Life



By Nate Smelle

Every year people from communities across Canada come together as teams for the Canadian Cancer Society's Relay for Life campaign. Traditionally, as part of this annual overnight fundraising initiative, participants collect donations and take turns walking, biking, or running around a track. According to the Canadian Cancer Society website, the act of doing laps on the track is meant to symbolize the perseverance and action needed to change the future of cancer.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, however, the Relay for Life campaign was forced to adapt, with organizers transforming the event into an online initiative. Since then, Relay for Life has continued to evolve. While some local campaigns have returned to the original model of doing laps around a track, others, including the Bancroft event have decided to move forward with the Canadian Cancer Society's new "Relay your Way" format.

After this year's event on June 10, Flo VanderMeer, a member of the Bancroft Crusaders Relay for Life team, spoke with Bancroft This Week about the local campaign, and how the new format has been working out in North Hastings. Instead of holding the overnight marathon event around the track as they used to, she said this year they decided to host a music in the park event.

"All in all, it turned out to be a good event," VanderMeer said. "We are looking forward to moving on with this type of event for now and doing things our way as a full team. What had happened is, with Covid and everything, things kind of fell apart. So we decided that rather than being a few little teams, we would amalgamate and make one big team. So that's what we did, we became the Bancroft Crusaders. Now we do functions together throughout the year. We've had euchre parties, we've had yard sales, we've had book sales. And now we did the music in the park, as well as doing our pledges, of course."

Giving a nod to all the talented musicians to perform at the event in Bancroft's Millennium Park on June 10, VanderMeer said the lineup included: the North Hastings Community Band; Appalachian Celtic; the Kelly Family; Dale Dredge; Reverend Bob; Albert Saxby; and, Kirk Bates. She said two special songs were played that evening: Danny Gokey's "The Comeback" during the Survivor Recognition Ceremony; and, "You should be here" by Cole Swindell during the lighting of the luminaries. She explained that they light the luminaries "in honour of those who are surviving, and continuing to fight the battle; and for those who we are

remembering.?

By means of their fundraising events and collecting donations online and in-person throughout the year, VanderMeer said they managed to raise more than \$51,320 in total. Recognizing how effective it is to campaign towards the same goal together, she said they intend to continue fundraising as one big Relay for Life team. She said they also plan to move forward with the Canadian Cancer Society's new Relay your Way format as well. "It's good, because that way we can share our expertise with each other, and everyone has a different role to play," said VanderMeer. "If we put our thoughts together, we can come up with some really good events... I think that's the format that we are going to continue with - Relay your Way - but still under the umbrella of the Canadian Cancer Society Relay for Life. They allow a little more latitude now, especially for small towns where we don't have the base of people that they have in the larger centres. This is a good fit for us."

The funds raised through the Relay for Life campaign will be used for the Canadian Cancer Society's research, education, prevention advocacy and patient services. To learn more about this annual campaign, and how to support and/or get involved with the Bancroft Crusaders visit their website at: www.bancroftcrusaders.ca.