



In the News at Meagan's Walk

April, 2011

Dear Friends,

It is hard to realize it has been 10 years since our Meagan left us. How much has happened in 10 years since the seed was planted first at Our Lady of Sorrows School in May 2001. Hundreds of children presented Meagan with their "Crane of Hope" to wish her health, and express their love to her. At that time I knew something marvellous was around the corner and soon to unfold. Our family and community did all to keep our dear angel, but there were other plans in store.

Walking away without Meagan on June 17th 2001. Something our family, no parent or family, should ever have to do. How could we have imagined that Meagan's message of compassion and love would spread as it has? From schools to community centres to the business world - every corner of our City would embrace this message of hope and make a difference for the children who need us.

In 2002 when we circled SickKids with their first-ever human hug, we did so in the worst possible wind and weather one could imagine. Giving this "hug" to all of the dear children and their caregivers inside SickKids was such a powerful 'moment'. And now, 10 years later, we continue to bring our message of hope and love to more Meagans and communities who help us celebrate our message of life.

I thank every one of you for your unconditional love and support. Know just how many children, and their families, are grateful for what all of us continue to do, to make our world a more healthy and loving place.

- Denise Bebenek, Founder of Meagan's Walk

Save the Date

10th Annual Meagan's Walk: *Creating a Circle of Hope*

On Sunday, May 8th, the Bebenek family will join hands with the thousands at the 10th Annual Meagan's Walk to create the "circle of hope" around SickKids. This Meagan's Walk signature "hug" has become a clear and touching symbol for those who are inside the hospital that they are not alone!

In Meagan's Walk, we honour Mother's Day meaningfully, bringing encouragement and hope to those who struggle with serious illness, and by feeling part of a caring community of support.

Meagan's Walk is an event for all ages and abilities. It starts at Ontario Place with a 5 kilometre walk, and culminates with the "hug" around The Hospital for Sick Children.

You can register for Meagan's Walk on the website www.meaganswalk.com and collect pledges on line too. It's safe, secure and easy! Walk teams are a vital component of Meagan's Walk too. School teams, workplace colleagues, families and friends, all walking to show support for those who struggle with illness, or sometimes to honour the memory of someone whom they love and miss, or simply as a gesture of spirited support for a wonderful cause!



Meagan's Walk raises hope and awareness about paediatric brain tumours which are the leading cause of cancer related death in young people age 20 and under. To date more than \$2 million has been raised through Meagan's Walk to support paediatric brain tumour research at SickKids. Each year the event has grown, both in numbers of participants and in funds contributed to research. With your continued support, this year will be no exception! Thank you!

Save the Date

Crane Ceremony

The 10th Annual *Meagan's Walk: Creating a Circle of Hope* Crane Ceremony will be held on Tuesday, April 19, 2011 at the Hospital for Sick Children. The Crane Ceremony will take place in the John and Myrna Daniels Hollywood Theatre from 10:30–11:30 am.

The Crane Ceremony is a symbol of hope and healing. More than 1,000 paper cranes will be presented to patients at SickKids who have survived brain tumours.

Please RSVP to Elizabeth if you would like to be a part of this special morning by phone at 416-239-7843 or by email at

elizabeth_meaganswalk@rogers.com.



Community Inspired

Tom and Jerry's Guardian Angels Team

The following is an excerpt from a letter sent to the Meagan's Walk newsletter team from Sandy Swift. We asked Sandy to tell us her story of how she and her husband became involved in Meagan's walk. This is what she said.

In 1996 my husband opened a sports bar in Aurora called Tom & Jerry's Bistro. At the time I was an R.N. at North York General Hospital. I did some of my training at HSC. We started doing golf tournaments every summer, with the Heart and Stroke foundation benefitting from our fundraising efforts. (We chose this charity because my father passed away from a heart attack at 54 years old.) After raising over \$265,000.00, I wanted to change our charity to something different. My mother died of breast cancer at 54 years old so I went to the Cancer society site and perused the site. I knew I wanted to make an impact with children so I found Meagan's site and it really touched my heart. I loved that it was on Mother's Day for my mom. Also, it did not consume your whole day, so we still had the rest of the day to spend with other loved ones.

Since 1996, we have opened 2 other locations. In 2001, we opened our Newmarket location and in 2010, we opened a Richmond Hill location. The first year my husband Sands and my 2 daughters, Victoria and Rebecca joined us for a very gratifying experience. That day I vowed I would never spend another Mother's Day anywhere else and that I would try to involve others so they too could experience the feelings. That was 2007. In 2008, we had a group of about 12 friends and in 2009, about 25 friends and family. In 2010, I involved customers, staff, friends and family and we ended up with a group of 56 on our team.

To date we have raised just over \$30,000 and our goal this year is to involve 100 people and raise \$20,000 more. Tom & Jerry's Guardian Angels are a group of very caring and special people who have dedicated all our efforts to raise as much money as possible for Meagan's cause because we care.

On March 12th, we had a kick-off party at our Newmarket location with great success. We have raised about \$2,000.00 so far and plan on surpassing our goal. We will be having a wrap up ceremony Sat. May 7th in the evening. This includes a raffle for prizes and a live band (Slime Dogs) from 9:00pm to 1:00am. We will announce our fundraising results and celebrate. Any one wishing to join us can check out the Slime Dogs, or Sandy Swift on Facebook and join our group.

*from left to right:
Meredith Brydon,
Victoria Swift,
Sandy Swift and
Paige North*



Birthday Party for Meagan's Walk

Andreas Bahr announced two months prior to his 7th birthday that he wanted to have his birthday party at a climbing gym. He decided as well that his guests were not to bring gifts, but rather donate the value of a gift to Meagan's Walk. His parents were initially surprised by his decision, until Andreas told them about the assembly at Our Lady of Sorrows School, where Andreas is in grade 2.

"We had an assembly in the gym and the older kids spoke to us about Meagan, and we saw a movie about her," said Andreas. "I knew that Meagan died of brain cancer and I wanted to help the scientists find a cure for brain cancer."

On December 12, 2010 approximately 12 friends showed up for two hours of rock climbing, pizza and cupcakes, to celebrate Andreas' birthday and Meagan. All kids wore a yellow ribbon and chanted "Go Meagan's Walk" during the group picture. When asked how he felt about giving up presents for his birthday, Andreas replied, "I did get presents from my mom and dad and from my aunts and uncles too, and all the kids at my party thought it was a good idea!"



*Andreas Bahr,
back row in
yellow shirt*

Dr. Sylvia Kennedy

Dr. Sylvia Kennedy was the principal of Our Lady of Sorrows School the year Meagan Bebenek was in junior kindergarten. "I can still see that shy little smile and those beautiful big eyes," she remembers. "Meagan was an inspiration to a whole community of people – children and adults. We did not receive the miracle for which we so ardently prayed. Meagan was taken from all of us. But our school, parish and neighbourhood community came together in an unprecedented way."

Dr. Kennedy has been involved with Meagan's Walk: Creating a Circle of Hope from the very beginning. She has been a member of the Walk Team, the Gala Team, and has promoted Meagan's Walk to the community in articles and personal appearances. Lately Sylvia has been very involved with the School Committee, developing programs for schools that have become involved by participating in and fundraising for Meagan's Walk.

"We met for the first couple of years in the Bebenek's home and nothing seemed impossible", Sylvia recounted. "A small group of people who had never organized anything resembling a charity "Walk" just went step by step, day by day putting together plans to hug a hospital."

Sylvia was also instrumental in supporting the Crane Ceremony, the first of which involved Meagan herself, when the children at Our Lady of Sorrows School presented her with 1,000 cranes of hope. Today Sylvia is the emcee for the Crane Ceremony that takes place each spring on the front lawn of the Hospital for Sick Children.

"Part of the magic of Meagan's Walk for me is seeing all the people who become involved who never knew Meagan and who may not have met Denise," says Kennedy. "Meagan's story and Denise's determination to help all of the children have resulted in this unique community of people who show up on Mother's Day – no matter what the weather, rain, hail, sleet, snow, we've had it all – and join hands around a huge building in a symbolic hug of all who are within. And now, ten years later, thousands of people share in that hug and the circle continues to widen and embrace more and more."

Dr. Kennedy plans to continue to work closely with Meagan's Walk volunteers to bring the message of hope to the children and families who need it. "I will forever be tied to Meagan's Walk," she says. "One little girl has changed my life in significant ways and I hope I can "pay it forward" from time to time by making some small difference in the lives of others through Meagan's Walk."

Meagan's Walk Gala Evening

Meagan's Walk Gala 2011

The snow fell softly on Toronto's historic Old Mill Inn as supporters gathered on February 5, 2011 to enjoy the annual Meagan's Walk Dinner and Dance Gala, celebrating the upcoming 10th anniversary of the Circle of Hope.

Kim Stockwood and Colleen Rusholme were spectacular as the Gala's emcees and the evening featured live musical performances by Baby Come Back and Royal Wood. The Sean Boutillier Academy of Dance entertained with dazzling talent from the Etobicoke based dance school. Special thanks go out to Royal Wood for his donation of \$5.00 for every CD sold at the gala, and to Crawford Custom Jewelers for their generous donation of a beautiful tennis bracelet, the special raffle prize.

Featured speakers included Denise Bebenek, Meagan's mother and founder of Meagan's Walk, Kevin Bebenek, Meagan's father, and Dr. Eric Bouffet, director of the Brain Tumour Program at SickKids. Dr. Bouffet gave an informative and encouraging update on new developments in brain tumour research, many of which have resulted from Meagan's Walk funding. A cheque for \$356,459.57, representing the total amount of monies donated by Meagan's Walk in 2010 was presented to Dr. Bouffet and all the doctors and researchers from the Hospital for Sick Children's paediatric brain tumour research department who were in attendance at the gala.



To view pictures from the evening please go to www.hadaball.com.

Meagan's Walk Team Corner

Tyler's T-Rex's

For the past two years Tyler Patterson and his team Tyler's T-Rex's have walked to support Meagan's Walk: Creating a Circle of Hope on Mother's Day. This little dinosaur, along with friends and family has raised nearly \$15,000 to support brain tumour research at the Hospital for Sick Children.

Tyler was diagnosed with a brain tumour in August 2008. His mother, Sarah Patterson, says, "He's doing really well and Tyler is happy to walk for SickKids, as it is his way to try to give back to the hospital. They've done a lot for us."

Tyler's team consists of grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins, many of whom come all the way from Trenton for the walk. "The team is going to walk again this May." Says Patterson. "We have 14 people on the team, mostly family." Sarah says she found out about Meagan's Walk on the Internet. She loved the idea of the walk as a way for her family to make something positive from a tough situation.

So when you are walking for Meagan's Walk on Mother's Day – Watch out for the Dinosaurs!

Sponsorship & Donation

Thank you for the continued support of our generous sponsors and donors. If you are interested in supporting Meagan's Walk, please click [here](#) or call us at 416-239-7843. Keep spreading the word! Please pass this email along to friends, family and colleagues who may be interested in volunteering, or supporting Meagan's Walk.



We invite you to share your stories about what Meagan's Walk means to you. Send us your stories, your photos and your planned fundraising activities.



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Meagan's Walk Team Corner

If you would like to promote awareness for your Meagan's Walk team, please contact Christine Tomlinson at ctomlinson9@cogeco.ca and we will gladly post your site or blog in our next newsletter.

Newsletter volunteers:

Blair Day
Tal Riff
Christine Tomlinson