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KIRKLAND

Bradwell softball tournament marks its 25th anniversary by hitting \$1-million mark

Albert Kramberger | From The Gazette | August 6, 2013

Inspired by the tragic death of a child, a charity softball tourney in Kirkland has helped raise more than \$1 million for the Montreal's Children's Hospital.

The 25th annual Sian Bradwell Softball Tournament, which concluded Sunday in Kirkland, is the mainstay of the memorial foundation established by Sharon and Ken Bradwell after their daughter, who was just 17 months old, succumbed to a rare form of cancer in 1986. The Sian Bradwell Fund has been used to purchase equipment mainly for the oncology/haematology department of the Children's Hospital, items such as pain control pumps, wheelchairs to a \$135,000 ultrasonic aspirator. As well, the Bradwells have established an endowment fund to generate revenues to purchase equipment in the future.

Valerie Frost, director of donor relations at the Montreal's Children's Hospital Foundation, said the Bradwells' efforts have inspired others.

"They have rallied volunteers, friends and family behind this cause and have amassed this quite considerable sum," she said. "The heart and soul of the fund is the softball tournament. It's the event that has made the Sian Bradwell Fund what it is. With that money, they have been able to have a tremendous impact (on the Children's)."

Frost said the softball tournament is one of the longest running grassroots community charity events supporting the Children's. "We're very grateful for that," she said.

While the Bradwells moved to Ontario about 15 years ago, they remain a fixture at the annual four-day slow-pitch softball tournament which has become a West Island tradition. Sharon, now 61, even acted as the tournament photographer this past week.

"We have a lot of wonderful volunteers, fundraisers and donors but what Sharon does, she's certainly in a league of her own, in terms of her commitment to the Children's. It's quite impressive," Frost said.

Sharon Bradwell, a former Pointe-Claire resident, said the idea of a memorial charity tournament came about due to the fact she had been playing softball in the West Island at the time and wanted to have something to do during the grieving process for their only child.

"I loved sports, so I decided let's try something to help the Children's Hospital. The first softball tournament was in 1989," she recalled.

Small charity events were held before the softball tournament was launched and a basketball tourney has since started up as well for the Sian Bradwell Fund, she said, adding a golf tournament in her daughter's memory should start up next year.

"The raising the \$1 million is wonderful because I know other little children are going through everything she went through," she said. "When I started the tournament, I wanted to keep her name alive because it would have broken my heart that she lived 17 months for nothing. She had a purpose in life, maybe it was to inspire me.

"You have to always try and find the positive in every negative," she added. "No matter what your situation in life, you always have to try and take the positive route even if it's hard to stay positive."

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Steve Wordsworth, a Kirklander and longtime organizer of the tourney, said all the funds raised each year are destined to purchase equipment, adding doctors at the Children's help prepare a wish list of required items. "We definitely want the treating doctors to say what do they need in order to treat these children," he said.

"If I can save one life, even if 20 or 25 years of involvement is involved, it's worth it to me," he added. "The fact it's direct and we know where it's going and we get a plaque on every single piece of equipment we purchase, makes it a direct contribution to helping the children and that's why I wanted to be so involved with it."

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