

Relay for Life is a way to make a difference

By Bill Rea

Cancer is a subject and disease that has hit just about everyone, whether it's the actual victims, their families or their friends.

But some people work to respond and fight back.

Brampton resident Suzanne Bracken is one such person, and she was a big contributor to striking back Friday evening with her involvement in the Relay for Life event, held at the Brampton Fairgrounds.

Bracken, an aquatic rehab specialist, said Friday afternoon about 150 people had registered for the relay, and she thought they might get about 50 more turning up at the last minute to take part.

"Our biggest goal is to raise funds to support the Canadian Cancer Society," she declared, adding they also want to assist in research, as well as providing support to those dealing with the disease, such as those who need help undergoing medical care, or who need transportation to appointments.

Bracken said she's suffered a lot of losses due to cancer, but there have also been some happier endings.

She said her father was diagnosed with the disease in 2000. In 2014, her best friend was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

"I felt pretty useless," she recalled thinking. "This was my way of getting involved and trying to make a difference."

This was Bracken's third year taking part in Relay for Life. This year, she was Volunteer Event Chair, as well as a team captain (Heart and Soul was the name of the team) and Community Champion.

"It just seemed that this was the best place for me to be," she remarked.

She added she formed her team, and there were 12 members ready to take part Friday night, including Bracken herself and her 12-year-old daughter Julia.

"It makes a huge difference," she said of the participation with the Cancer Society and such events as this. "The Canadian Cancer Society is in it for the long haul."

"I started it for very personal reasons," she added, but said the participation over the years has given her the chance to talk to many survivors, and that has convinced her it's making a difference.

The stories she has heard from survivors have "completely blown me away."



Suzanne Bracken was joined at Friday's Relay for Life by her daughter Julia, 12, and son Justin, 7.