

Courage shows in face of death

As Dwayne Reid prepares to die from leukemia, he and his family are making every moment count



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GUELPH

Spend an hour with Dwayne and Maggie Reid and you'll come away with a lesson in how to live life to the fullest.

Dwayne is 31. He has a rare and aggressive form of leukemia and has been told by his doctor it's only a matter of weeks before he will die.

His face and feet are swollen from the medication he's taking to fight an infection. His hair is almost gone from chemotherapy treatments.

He has a shunt in his chest to hook up an intravenous tube, and if he's around other people he wears a surgical facemask.

The disease has destroyed his immune system, leaving him susceptible to whatever is going around.

Yet there's no self-pity from either Dwayne or Maggie, and in the face of death the Guelph couple, now married nine years, are facing the challenge head on.

Words like 'courage', 'strength,' and 'dignity' leap to mind but they both shrug off these images of heroism.

"I'm holding up all right," said Maggie matter-of-factly. "I'm sure I'll have my time to fall apart. But not now. Now is for Dwayne and the kids."

When Dwayne was diagnosed last January, the cancer was already entrenched.

Chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant were not enough to put him in remission.

When doctors told the Reids in January of this year there was nothing more that could be done for Dwayne, the best advice they got was to go on vacation.

“My dream vacation was Disney World. I would have loved to watch the kids on the rides,” said Dwayne. The couple have three children, Amber 2, Keegan, 6 and Dylan, 8.

“Financially we were unable to do that. Then Dreams to Memories fell in our lap. They granted our wish.”

Dwayne was too ill to travel to Florida, so they opted for the Wheels Inn, in Chatham.

“It was excellent and we all had so much fun. The staff there really catered to us. They treated us like royalty,” Dwayne explained. “I’m so grateful.”

Maggie pulled out the photos she took on the weekend and tried in vain to keep them out of Amber’s grasp. **SEE COURAGE: PAGE A2**

Courage: Fort Erie couple help others see dreams fulfilled

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

With great understatement she turned to her daughter and said, “No honey. These are very special.”

That’s just the kind of reaction Ann and Bob Richardson hoped for when they founded Dreams to Memories in 1999.

Retired and blessed with good health and energy, the Fort Erie couple decided it was time to pay back some of the good fortune, they’d enjoyed in their lives.

“There are groups who grant wishes, for children,” explained Ann Richardson in a phone interview, “but as far as we could tell, there’s nothing for a young parent facing terminal illness.”

“We fill dreams and in the process we create memories for the surviving children.”

The foundation has granted wishes for 17 families since it started, and Richardson said as word spreads, so do requests.

The Reids were fortunate that their social worker at McMaster hospital in Hamilton had heard of the organization and helped bring the two together.

“We are very much in. the awareness business,” laughed Richardson.

“We need health professionals to be aware of us, we need donors to be aware of us too. And Bob and I are well aware we have to cover ourselves for scars.

“I feel like Mrs. Santa Claus though, it goes right through to your heart.”

Information about Dreams to Memories is available at the Web site:
www.dreams2memories.org

Maggie said other groups have come to their aid as well.

The Guelph Storm hockey team heard about Dwayne and the fact that the boys love hockey, so they treated Dwayne and his sons to a hockey game, gave Dwayne a jersey with his name embroidered on the back and gave the boys signed hockey cards.

Barber Glass Company is raffling off tickets to see the Toronto Maple Leafs and will give the proceeds to Maggie.

“We don’t have life insurance,” said Maggie, who works as a dietary aid at the nursing home in Eden Mills.

“People have been really great. It’s amazing what an illness like this will do.”

As the couple prepares for the worst, they know they have also seen the best.

“God has helped us through this journey,” Maggie said.

“Even when (Dwayne) finally passes, I know he’ll be OK.”

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