

Gill has a new lease, and outlook, on life

by Nathan Howes
Special to the Beaver

What didn't kill Oakville's Sheryl Gill six years ago has only made her stronger.

In 2007, the 44-year-old suffered a cardiac arrest during a 10-kilometre run. Doctors discovered she had an undetected congenital heart defect.

Gill's left coronary artery was out of place, which required eight hours of open-heart surgery to correct.

"It was like that for 38 years. The vessel started to harden. It was in a really bad place where every time my heart beat it got pinched off. For this condition, they told me I shouldn't have made it out of my teens. I should have died years ago," said Gill. "After something like this, I really do believe there are no accidents."

Two months after surgery, Gill went into rehab where she got "stronger and stronger," she said, noting her outlook on life was changed.

She has since fully recovered and is gearing up for the Heart and Stroke Foundation's (HSF) 26th annual BeceI Heart and Stroke Ride for Heart on Sunday, June 2 in Toronto.

According to HSF, 13,000 cyclists will partake this year in Canada's largest charity cycling event. It will be Gill's fourth year.

"When I started (cycling in) the ride, I did a 75-kilometre distance and I raised about \$3,200. I never had done anything like that before," said Gill.

Prior to taking part in the Ride for Heart, Gill was a survivor speaker for the HSF. She was "quite involved" with speaking and canvassing, she said, and ran a workshop for survivors to share stories and the latest statistics on Canadians' health.

"I'm teaching people about lifestyle — diet, exercise, stress management (and) staying away from cigarettes. The giving aspect feeds our soul. (Doctors) really see changes in people's physiology because of giving back," said Gill.

In 2011, Gill became an official spokesperson for the Ride for Heart and has shot a number of promotional TV commercials to promote it. She's



Oakville's Sheryl Gill is a spokesperson for and a participant in the upcoming BeceI Ride for Heart in Toronto on June 2. Here, Gill is seen with team members, from left, Hannah Lawrence, Dominique Cote, and Jacquelynne Iarocci.

photo by Eric Riehl - Oakville Beaver (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog)

also been featured on Rogers TV's *Focal Point*, *Daytime Toronto* and CP24's *Wylde on Health*.

"We did a national commercial and it was quite rudimentary. The next year we had a gorgeous campaign (with) a bunch of still shots. There are a couple of infomercial (videos) you can get on YouTube," said Gill. "(There are) about eight videos of different people just showing that there is no one person who necessarily gets heart disease. It's not just the old man's disease."

As a massage therapist and health coach, Gill said she believes in taking responsibility for your health and is passionate about her role as a spokesperson.

"It's my life. It's something that I do day-in, day-out. It gives me a bigger audience. If we don't have our health, we don't have much."

In preparation for the Ride for Heart, Gill cycles every day, even if it's only 15 minutes, she said. She has always enjoyed cycling.

"In university, it was my sole method of transportation and then life just got in the way. My bike sat and did very little most of the time," said Gill. "Now I'm cycling much more. In the last four years, I've cycled more than I have in the last 15 years."

Gill will be riding this year with her group,

The Heart Truth, which has nine other members. One of them is 12-year-old Dominique Cote, who joined the team to make a difference in supporting her family and the HSF, she said.

"I want to raise money to find cures for heart attacks and strokes," said Cote.

To help raise money for the Ride, The Heart Truth is hosting a roller-skating fundraiser on Saturday, June 1 in Mississauga.

"It is a team effort. Some of us have more experience with fundraising, but the girls are doing a great job," said Gill. "We're holding this great event because exercise is still the No. 1 way to (do something) positive for your heart."

Earlier this year, the Heart and Stroke Foundation released its Reality Check report on the state of Canadians' health.

The report suggests if the primary factors for increased risks of heart disease and stroke can be managed — lack of exercise, poor nutrition, smoking, excessive stress and alcohol consumption — Canadians can enhance their health and quality of life in their later years.

"(The organization) knows so much more about lifestyle. Within the first two years most people died after having a heart attack. Now I hear people saying, 'I'm on 10 extra years' because of things that have happened due to research."

To donate to Gill or The Heart Truth, or the HSF, visit www.rideforheart.ca or call 1-855-741-3174. Tickets for the roller-skating event can be purchased online at www.rollerskateforheart.eventbrite.ca.



Dr. Stephen Phelan, DDS

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One area that is a focus of my practice is to help the many people suffering from advanced tooth wear and erosion. It seems

this is a problem that is increasing but it can be treated if caught before it is too late. The main issue if you feel you suffer from any form of tooth wear is protection and prevention. If your tooth wear has been diagnosed at an early stage you can concentrate on preventing further tooth wear with diet modification, protective dental appliances and some limited dental bonding to restore the small areas of attrition or erosion. If tooth wear has progressed to the point that your protective enamel has been worn away and you have exposed your inner dentin you will likely need a more comprehensive solution.

The pictures included are an example of a patient with severe attrition, erosion and bite collapse that I solved with a full mouth rehabilitation using porcelain restorations.



If you suffer from tooth wear or other advanced dental problems, I would like to invite you to call my office to arrange a personal consultation appointment.

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