Survivors provide inspiration for Heart and Stroke Walk

By Kiran Mander
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

Heart disease and stroke are among the leading causes of death in Canada taking thousands of lives each year.

Every seven minutes, someone dies from cardiovascular disease — heart disease, diseases of the blood vessels and stroke. However, amid these devastating moments, there remain stories of hope.

Among the participants expected for this Sunday’s Halton Family Walk for Heart and Stroke at Bronte Creek Provincial Park are four women whose own tales of survival provide inspiration.

Sixty-seven year old Margaret Jones is a wife, mother and grandmother of two. She is a strong woman full of love and life.

However, today Jones is leading a healthy, active, non-smoker life, with no damage to her heart. She has also become a volunteer with the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Jones’ experience led her to discover that being a healthy, active, non-smoker provides strong reminders to others.

“I strive to keep healthy and have a positive attitude,” Jones said. “As a survivor I feel very blessed and I continue to lead a very active lifestyle and see my cardiologist every year.”

Jones’ experience led her to discover that being a healthy, active, non-smoker provides strong reminders to others.

She has just said goodbye to her husband who was going to have surgery. As she reached for a towel, her right hand suddenly dropped to her side. She lost feeling in the right side of her face and her legs gave out, causing her to fall.

Fortunately, Coulson’s husband had not yet left and upon hearing noises upstairs, rushed to his wife’s side and called 911.

When paramedics arrived, they determined Coulson had suffered a stroke. Since Coulson reached the hospital in less than an hour, she was an excellent candidate for Tissue Plasminogen Activator (TPA). TPA is a drug that heart and stroke researchers discovered is able to break down clots in stroke patients if administered within three hours of the first onset of stroke symptoms.

Coulson regained feeling in her fingers within 10 minutes of receiving the drug. Within 24 hours she was able to move her right arm and leg. She walked with speech and occupational therapists for months to regain her speech and fine motor skills.

Today, Coulson is enjoying every minute of her life. “I am happy to say I am 48 and alive,” she said. “I live for today and not for tomorrow.”

The survivor urges others affected by heart disease and stroke to give themselves time for their body to heal.

Thirty-two year old Milton resident Lewis will take part in this Sunday’s fundraising Halton Family Walk for Heart and Stroke at Bronte Creek Provincial Park.

Lewis has a story that dates back to 1987, the year her son Christopher was born.

He was born premature and, just seven days after his birth, it was discovered that something was wrong with his heart. He died of a rare heart disease called endocardibroelastosis.

While there is still no cure for the disease, Lewis has been working for decades with the Heart and Stroke Foundation to help raise money for research.

In 2001, tragedy struck again when Yvonne’s husband Richard suffered a heart attack. Afterwards, he was born with quadruple bypass surgery.

Then, five months after Richard’s heart attack, Yvonne suffered one herself.

With the help of rehabilitation, both Yvonne and Richard are living strong, healthy lives.

The four women are members of a six-person walk team, taking part in this Sunday’s walk. It features 2.5 and 5 km routes. Registration is at 9 a.m. and the walks are at 10:30 a.m. For information, contact Trina Carey at 905-634-7722.

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