

Jessie shares her courageous tale at cancer event
By MEREDITH CLARKE, London Free Press,
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The Brick on Wharncliffe Road South was the host site for about 70 people who gathered to celebrate, remember, and support awareness of childhood cancer.

Store manager Jim Norbury held this event extremely close to his heart as his daughter, Jessie, battles childhood cancer. Jim and his wife Renee stood strong and proud while they listened to their 13-year-old girl speak about her current battle with the illness, teaching the audience a lesson on courage.

Master of ceremonies was Childcan executive director Marianne Hebb.

"The event was not only about awareness, but about hope and celebration in how far we've come in helping children survive their childhood cancer and helping support children and families through their journey," Hebb said. "We still have a ways to go in finding a cure for childhood cancer . . . but we are headed in the right direction."

Shirley Yuan, 17, who recently finished her treatment for childhood cancer, shared her story with the teary crowd while friends and family cheered her on.

Renee Simmons, mother of Stephanie, a three-time brain tumour survivor, spoke from a parent's perspective and the many levels of impact this disease has on the families living with childhood cancer.

Childcan board chairperson Bill Clunas (Desjardins Financial Security) and Lainie Gardner (Gardner Auctions Inc.) both attended with their families.

Being the group that never stops caring, several staff members and their families from the Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre pediatric oncology team came out to rally on the event. From the Children's Hospital were Lawrence Jardine, director of paediatric oncology/hematology and Shayna Zelcer, pediatric oncologist, joined by her family. Shawna Cunningham, Todd Wharton, Melissa Zurch, Deborah Dewbury-Langley, Evelyn Mooser and Cathy Wilson are affiliated with the program and gladly gave of their time.

Bright-eyed Emily Beck, going through her own cancer journey, was a delightful and determined hotdog seller.

Joined by Barb Dagleman, Mary-Ann Wilson-Sprague, Julie Pomerleau and daughter Lauren, Emily's skills garnered \$700 in donations. Jill Osbourne attended from the Children's Health Foundation, as did pediatric cancer nurse Margaret Warden.