

Mother with MS has team support

Apr 20, 2007 (Oakville)

Our team was brought together in the name of friendship and support!

I was diagnosed on Jan. 15 with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), at the age of 25. A single mother, my son was 10 days old at the time when I experienced my first "documented" MS attack. I was 24. I was finally diagnosed when he was only 10 months.

I was devastated and now, three months after my diagnosis, I am unsure about my future and what lies ahead. I wonder if I will be in a wheelchair next week; if one day I will wake-up and be unable to pick him up. I wonder if I will be the one to teach him how to ride a bike; if I will be able to play with him at the cottage this summer (or five summers from now).

The frightening thing about this disease is the uncertainty about its progression. The doctors cannot tell the diagnosed person how often they will experience "attacks," or how long those attacks will last. Every day without an attack, is a blessing. It means that I am able to go to work to support my son and plan for his future.

My family was quick to jump into "support" mode, which did not surprise me.

I avidly began to research multiple sclerosis. While on the MS Society website, I came across the MS Supercities Walk. I had seen the advertisements in the past, but I had never actually known what MS was, nor was I interested. I didn't know anyone who had it, and I was too young to have whatever it was.

I decided that I would be a supporter of the walk this year. My family was eager to participate, as well. Then, Ashlee White, a friend and co-worker asked if she could walk, too. Then, my boyfriend's mom wanted to walk. All of a sudden, when I was collecting pledges at work, my wonderful co-workers/friends were jumping in asking to join the walk also!

Our work (East Side Mario's ,Winston Park, Oakville) has always been close-knit. But, to have the support of all of these people was shocking! I asked our owners, David and Sue Christensen, if we could call our team East Side Mario's as a way of showing how much our workplace really cares not only about a wonderful cause, but me, personally.

As a team, we have raised nearly \$5,000. If an employee is not a team member (taking part in the walk), he or she has pledged us.

We are not only employees/co-workers, but at East Side's, we are all like family to each other. Although it is not only employees who are a part of our team East Side Mario's, everyone has come together for an important cause: to raise money to find a cure for MS.

Michelle Leon



TEAMWORK The staff of East Side Mario's has rallied around fellow employee Michelle Leon, who was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis just a few weeks after giving birth to her son Nathan. The staff raised \$5,000 for the MS Supercities Walk last Sunday, April 15. Pictured here with Michelle and her son are: John McCarthy, Jenna Lee, Sarah Fox, Kirk Anderson, Shauna Feener, Dayna Dattilo, Alexandra, Jesse and Susan Christensen, Ashlee White, Regan Walsh, Barbara Crouthamel, Alison Baker and Athena Doyle.