

Media Release

For Immediate Release
April 6, 2011

Burlington Family Rallies around Teen with Brain Tumour

(Hamilton, ON, April 6) For Paula Skowronski's teenage son Jacob, it all began with a headache that just wouldn't go away. "Our doctor prescribed two Advils, twice a day," the Burlington Mom remembers. When that didn't help, the doctor suspected the busy high school student's symptoms were caused by stress. But after Jacob experienced a crawling numbness down one side of his body he was sent for an MRI that confirmed he had a brain tumour, which turned out to be malignant. Since then, Jacob has faced two surgeries and chemotherapy. Now recuperating at home, Jacob and the family is determined to improve the situation for anyone affected by a brain tumour by supporting the Hamilton Spring Sprint for Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada on Saturday, May 7.

This journey with a brain tumour has been a rapid education for Jacob and his large, dedicated family including his parents, step-parents and siblings. "Jacob has four loving parents and a really good support system," says Paula. This support system has been important as the experience seems to change in an instant: after a recent follow-up exam, Jacob found himself requiring an unexpected second surgery during the week of March 14. "The tumour was continuing to grow, so they went in to remove more," Paula explains. Soon Jacob will start a course of radiation and additional chemotherapy to stop the tumour's growth.

In addition to supporting her son, Paula is channelling her energy by volunteering as the coordinator of Hamilton's 2011 Spring Sprint. Each member of the family is pitching in to help, even the youngest members, to raise money for Team Jacob, the family's Spring Sprint team. This includes his brothers Lucas (15) and Quinton (8) and sisters Chloe (8) and Sophie (12) who have raised more than \$3,000 by selling handmade bracelets.

The family first learned about Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada from Dr. Peter Dirks their neurosurgeon at The Hospital for Sick Children. Paula explains, "Dr. Dirks had spoken at a Brain Tumour Foundation conference the year before and I asked if he thought we should go to the next one. He said yes, we should attend, so we did, in October of 2010." There they met other families who have been similarly affected by brain tumours, shared information and learned about the latest medical developments.

The organization's Patient Resource Handbook offers important information including guidance on how to communicate with her son. "It was really good, easy to use and sensitive. It helped us to talk to him about it," says Paula. "It was nicely worded and worked well for us."

On Saturday May 7, 2011, Paula, Jacob, their family and friends on Team Jacob will join hundreds of others in the city and thousands across the country in the annual Spring Sprint for Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada. In 2010, participants traveled the equivalent of going from Victoria B.C. to Halifax N.S. and back, raising an unprecedented \$1.4 million dollars. The 2011 Spring Sprint features 2.5 and 5 km routes for walkers, joggers and runners. Participants can register online at www.springsprint.ca or by calling 1-800-265-5106.



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Jacob is an active but reserved teen who needs some coaxing before he'll talk about how he feels. "He just wants to be normal", says Paula. "He's going to school, he's busy, has his part-time job. He's going to the gym. I tell him, if you want to be sad, be sad. It's a challenge because you don't want them to feel their life is ruined. You do everything you can to help them stay positive and provide the best outlook possible."

As for the future Paula says, "We are soldiering on, we want to raise as much money as we can. I want Jacob to feel empowered, like he can make a difference to other people. I want him to persevere, plan ahead, and plan for the future."

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada thanks National Platinum Sponsor Deloitte and National Sponsors, Roche, Merck and CriticalControl. Without this considerable contribution and generous support, Spring Sprint would not be able to reach as many families affected by a brain tumour across the country.

Event: Hamilton Spring Sprint for Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada
Date: Saturday, May 7, 2011, 9:00 am Check-In
Location: Dofasco Park, F.H. Sherman Recreation Centre; Stoney Creek, ON

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About the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada

There are an estimated 55,000 people in this country living with a brain tumour and 10,000 new cases are diagnosed each year, many of those are children. Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada provides information through a free, comprehensive Patient Resource Handbook, live and web-based annual education events, and support through a Canada-wide, toll-free 1-800 line, website (www.braintumour.ca), and national support groups that meet monthly across Canada. Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada also supports brain tumour research through annual grants-in-aid program and to date has donated \$2.75 million directly to brain tumour research. Please visit Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada's website at www.braintumour.ca.

For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact:

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