

## **“Don’t let the brain tumour stop you”**

*Debbie Ackerman faces each day as a brain cancer survivor – a very different perspective on life, she says*

**Montreal, QC, May 25, 2016** – For any 50-year-old, looking back on a life that’s included solo travel, university, and even a stint working at a tropical resort chain, would be satisfying; but for Debbie Ackerman, what’s even more exceptional is that she’s done all these things but is also a childhood brain cancer survivor.

Just three days before her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, Debbie underwent surgery to remove a plum-sized, cancerous tumour from her brain. “So even though a birthday is supposed to be a really happy celebration,” she explains, “every year my birthday also reminds me of my brain cancer and everything that’s changed because of it.” Debbie not only endured the invasive brain operation, which would leave part of her skull open for the rest of her life, but she also had to undergo whole brain radiation that would eventually destroy the hair follicles on her head. “I was constantly made fun of growing up. Imagine being a 5, 10 or 13-year-old girl who’s bald – it wasn’t easy.” Spinal non-malignant tumours, thyroid cancer and mobility issues would follow Debbie into her 40s, adding to the late side effects from the original brain cancer treatment she had.

Despite the incredible health and physical challenges Debbie has faced since her childhood, she’s accomplished so much, attributing much of her perseverance to a “stubborn streak” she developed early on. “After the brain cancer, everyone thought I was going to be in a wheelchair for the rest of my life. But my mom says I made myself get up and walk!” she says laughing.

Debbie will lace up her sneakers and take part in the 2016 Montreal Brain Tumour Walk on Sunday, June 12<sup>th</sup> at Angrignon Park. Opening Ceremonies and Brain Tumour Survivor Recognition begin at 10:45am. Online registration is encouraged; there is no entry fee to participate. The Brain Tumour Walk is family-friendly and non-competitive, and features 2.5km and 5km routes.

When asked about the help she’s found on her brain cancer journey, she credits some of her recovery to Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada’s Montreal support group, where she’s met other patients and survivors who share some of her same experiences. “Every so often, someone says something and I have an ‘aha’ moment – like oh, so this doesn’t only happen to me. Even though I don’t meet lots of childhood brain cancer survivors, it still seems like adult survivors face similar issues to me.”

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## Media Release, cont'd

### **About the Brain Tumour Walks**

Every day in Canada, 27 people are diagnosed with a brain tumour. That's 10,000 new diagnoses each year. By signing up and fundraising as part of a Brain Tumour Walk, patients, survivors, family and friends join the nationwide movement to end brain tumours. Their efforts support Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada's specialized resources that empower patients to be their own best health care advocates and fund the ground-breaking research that will find a cure for the disease. For more than two decades, Brain Tumour Walks (formerly Spring Sprints) have been the community event to bring together thousands of Canadians in tribute to and in memory of people affected by a brain tumour. **For more information about the 20+ Brain Tumour Walks taking place across Canada in 2016, visit [www.BrainTumourWalk.ca](http://www.BrainTumourWalk.ca).**

### **About Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada**

Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada is the only national charity that offers information and support to patients affected by any kind of brain tumour – be it cancerous, non-malignant or metastases. The organization also funds research across North America and, since 1982, has dedicated more than \$4 million to finding a cure for the disease and improving treatment for brain tumour survivors. **Learn more at Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada's website: [www.BrainTumour.ca](http://www.BrainTumour.ca).**

**To interview Debbie or for further information about the Montreal Brain Tumour Walk, please contact:**

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