



Gord Delaney has raised \$23,000 for cancer charities through his campaign, Lilies for Lillie, which pays homage to his late mother, Lillie Delaney. Teenage Delaney poses with his mother, Lillie.

For the love of Lillie

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Special to The Telegram

Lillie Delaney drove to the Health Sciences Centre in St. John's on Nov. 3, 2000 complaining of a headache. One week later she was dead. She'd recently celebrated her 53rd birthday.

"It was almost like watching a movie," Gord Delaney says of going to the hospital and hearing his mother had passed away.

"You're walking down the corridor and you see the doctor at the end. And they take you into a room and tell you."

Lillie Delaney had been diagnosed with chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML) about six months prior to her death.

Gord Delaney was 21 years old at the time.

"Mom had gone for routine blood work the day before and they called from her doctor's office saying they wanted to talk to her," Delaney said.

"She was at work and when she got home I told her. She knew right away that something was wrong. She found out that she had cancer but she had no symptoms whatsoever."

His mother continued to live life to the fullest, Delaney says. Her cancer was well controlled with a drug called Interferon.

"Dad would give Mom a needle every day and after couple of weeks, she was back to normal and working full time for the Newfoundland Liquor Corp. People had seen her the week before she died so it was complete and utter shock."

For two years after his mother's death, Delaney admits he was angry at the world for having to bury his mother at a young age.

"I just didn't know what to do with myself. But I knew that I needed to do something. And I'd promised Mom when she was in hospital that I wouldn't forget her. And she said, 'Promise me that other people won't forget me either.'"

As a means of honouring his mother's memory, Delaney holds a yearly fundraiser called Lilies for Lillie.

He drew on the marketing skills he obtained through his commerce degree at Memorial University to come up with the unique name.

Since 2003, the project has raised over \$23,000 for various cancer charities.

"My brother (Frank Jr.) helps out a lot. He's based in Alberta. My Dad (Frank Sr.) helps out, too."

The annual concert takes place at the Bella Vista in St. John's on May 5. Various bands will perform throughout the evening.

"My mother was a very vocal person," Delaney says.

"She sang at weddings, at funerals, at nursing homes. So, she would want her life to be celebrated with music."

"Everything around that night will be representative of my mom. It will be night to celebrate her life. She's gone but she's still around in spirit."

For the third year, Lilies for Lillie is working with the Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Cancer Care Foundation. One hundred per cent of profits from the fundraiser stay in the province to help cancer patients and their families deal with the disease, Delaney says.

This year, Lilies for Lillie has committed to raising \$25,000 for the foundation's patient and family support endowment fund.

Upon reaching this goal, a permanent fixture will be placed in the cancer centre in St. John's and it will read the Lillie Delaney Endowment.

"We're leaving my mom's name everywhere and that's what this is all about," Delaney says.

Among the prizes up for grabs at this year's fundraiser is a trip for two to the Calgary Stampede and a G40 series Garrison guitar.

Those wishing to support Delaney's efforts can purchase one of the project's yearly lapel pins for \$2, can buy a ticket on the prize draws or can come out to the concert.

"Right now we have about 5,000 pins going around town with Mom's name on them. So, our organization is represented by the lilies but my mother's name is on every one of these pins and that keeps her close to it all."

Delaney says the fundraiser would not be possible without the support of his employer Weather Shore Windows as well as Chris Griffiths, Boston Pizza and Super 8.

"We'd never be able to do this without them. And my friends have been my family, too. They've helped me beyond belief."

Delaney encourages anyone who'd like to help make this year's Lilies for Lillie project a success, to get involved.

"I started Lilies for Lillies in memory of Mom but it's in memory of all people affected by cancer," he says.

Delaney says, if his mother is half as proud of him as he is of her, then he's happy.

"Mom is the first thing on my mind in the morning and the last thing on my mind when I go to bed. I couldn't do anything to keep her with us. But if I can help others in her memory, I think Mom would be pretty proud of that."

While the fundraiser was initially held in November, it now takes place in May — close to Mother's Day.

"They say a bond between a mother and a son is pretty strong. And in my case it was."

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