

Charity golf event honours deceased cancer victim

Jason Gomez, who died at 18, was superb athlete; money will help care for young adults with disease

JOHN MEAGHER
THE GAZETTE

More than 160 friends and family members of the late Jason Gomez will gather on Monday at the Île Perrot Golf Club to play in a charity tournament bearing his name.

Gomez was a standout teenage athlete from Kirkland who excelled at almost any sport he tried, mainly hockey and soccer.

He had plans to play hockey at an American prep school until he was diagnosed with stomach cancer at 17 years old. He succumbed to the disease on Feb. 3, 2006, at the age of 18.

Jason's mother, Pauline Patulli, who three years earlier lost her husband, Carlos, to the same disease, is trying to cope as best she can under such tragic circumstances.

"I have to be strong because I have another son, Nicholas, who'll be 14 this month," Patulli said last week.

Her son Jason's deadly illness came to light first as a stomach ache, then progressed. "At first, we thought it was just acid reflux, but it didn't go away," Patulli said.

Her son was later treated at Notre Dame Hospital in Montreal under the care of Dr. Denis Soulières, who has been instrumental in helping launch the Jason Fund.

Proceeds raised at next Monday's golf tournament will go to the advancement of care to young adults stricken with cancer, through the Fondation du CHUM at the Centre Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal.

"Jason almost beat the disease, but it was a very aggressive cancer," Patulli said.

Now, she hopes something positive can come from the untimely death of her eldest son, a dynamic young athlete and person who was struck down by disease as he was about to enter a fun and exciting phase of his life.

Patulli said the objective of establishing the Jason Fund is to improve care for young people with cancer by providing a support network for patients and their families. Some funding will also go to cancer research in

young adults between 18 and 25.

"At that age, nobody expects to get cancer," she said. "The best of life is ahead of you, there is still so much to do. You can't ever imagine being so sick as a teenager. They can't understand it."

Soulières said less is known about cancer in young adults compared to children or the elderly. Traditional treatments like chemotherapy have their drawbacks. "Young adults are not able to tolerate chemotherapy as well as children," Soulières said. Therefore, alternative treatments need to be researched.

Gomez was a healthy and active as a youngster. He played soccer for the Lac St. Louis Lakers and Lakeshore clubs, and was an accomplished inter-city hockey player as well. He also was passionate about golf.

Patulli is looking forward to seeing so many of her son's friends and teammates on Monday, but she ad-

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PAULINE PATULLI, JASON'S MOTHER

mits it will be trying for her emotionally.

"I'm trying to be strong right now, but I know it will be tough," said Patulli, who works full-time.

She is hoping the Jason Fund will serve as a legacy of hope for others who find themselves in dire straits so early in life.

"Jason was a wonderful son," she said, "and he had many friends."

All 40 foursomes at the inaugural tournament are filled, a testimony to Gomez's rich but short life.

Anyone wishing to make a donation to the Jason Fund can send a cheque to Fonds Jason, 69 Montague St., Kirkland, H9J 2T7

For more information, email fondsjeason@videotron.ca

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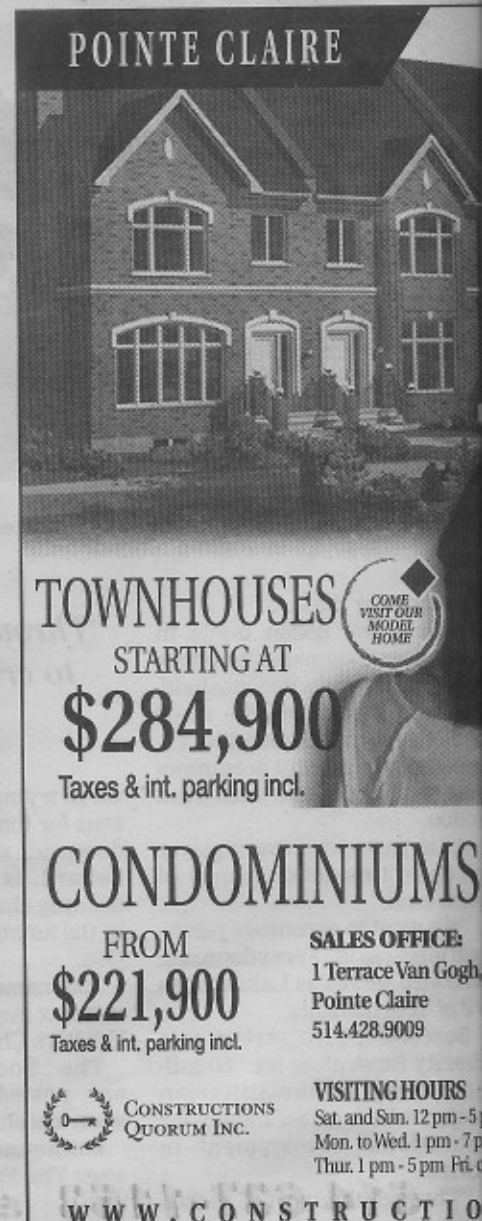
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