

Sports car owners rev up to fight blindness

People who care navigate their exotic vehicles through the local area to raise \$30,000

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Edmonton Journal columnist Nick Lees

Photograph by: File, Edmonton Journal

Jack's Grill owner Mark Goodwin offered to prepare a meal for 60 people.

Wade Brintnell of The Wine Cellar provided voluptuous wines.

And some 26 drivers and navigators roared away in exotic sports cars to fight blindness.

"Our first child Erick, who is now six, was born with a rare, inherited retinal disorder called leber congenital amaurosis (LCA)," says Nadine Seed. "It meant he was born blind with no hope of a cure.

"This rocked our world and we began to find out as much as we could about Erick's ailment." Nadine and her husband, Mike Seed, discovered groundbreaking research was being carried out in Canada and the United States that provided hope of a cure.

The couple decided to become involved in helping fund researchers and that led to them talking to members of the Foundation Fighting Blindness. "The foundation's mandate is to find the causes, treatments and ultimately the cures for retinitis pimentos, macular degeneration and related retinal diseases by supporting research and public awareness," says Seed.

On Sunday, the sports cars roared away on the couple's inaugural fundraiser, a scavenger hunt called Drive For Sight.

Ivor Lammerink from the Porsche Club mapped out the route that wound its way around the country southeast of Edmonton, says Seed. "Questions were asked such as the distance between New

Sarepta, the village made more famous by former Journal cartoonist Yardley Jones, to the Northern Bear Golf Course."

The event raised more than \$30,000, says Seed. Next year's event is being planned.

SMART HELP FOR LITTLE WARRIORS

Don Oborowsky, who ordered one of the first 25 Smart Cars in Edmonton, has given it away.

"I had a little fun with it," says the president and CEO of Waiward Steel Fabricators.

"But then the young ladies in the office used it most often for going out to lunch.

"For the last year it hasn't been used much and I decided to give it to Little Warriors. They plan to auction it next month at a fundraiser."

Little Warriors is an Edmontonbased charitable organization focused on the education and prevention of child sexual abuse.

"It breaks my heart when I think of the abuse inflicted on innocent, trusting children," Oborowsky says.

Statistics show neglect is the most common form of reported child abuse cases, making up more than 40 per cent of all reported cases.

Oborowsky, one of seven children born to a farmer in Cactus Lake, Sask., says his parents were extremely kind.

"I came to Edmonton at the age of 17 with \$65 in my pocket," he says.

He has never forgotten his roots as he developed one of Canada's most profitable privately owned steel companies and has contributed hugely to scores of charities.

Oborowsky was once at a meeting where he offered to donate \$1 million to a diabetes research institute. His son Shonn, chef/co-owner with his dad of Character's Restaurant, developed Type 1 diabetes.

"I felt more excited about giving the money away than as if I'd won it," he says. "We drew up plans for the institute on a napkin.

"I feel sorry for people who are comfortably off and sit around and talk about the things they have. I think they have a responsibility to help people who are less fortunate.

"People I have admired most include the late John Poole and his wife Barbara, and John Hokanson and his wife Susan."

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF RUGBY

An awkward silence fell over the executive meeting of the Edmonton Rugby Club in 1959 when Norm Suvan suggested a second, all-Canadian team be formed.

"We just had too many players for one club," says Suvan, this year inducted into the Edmonton Rugby Union Hall of Fame. "The silence was broken by the late MLA and lawyer Sam Wright, who said, 'You are absolutely right, Norm.' "

At the next practice, new immigrants lined up at one end of the field with Canadians at the other.

"That's how the Tigers Rugby Club was born," says Suvan. "The Edmonton Rugby Club later became the Pirates."

In 1961, the Leprechauns Rugby Football Club was formed by Jimmy Gordon and Davie Graham.

The Tigers and the Leprechauns merged in 1992 to become the Leprechauns Tiger RFC and without too much mathematics, if the age of the clubs is added, it comes to 100 years.

"We are celebrating the LT's 100 years of rugby July 24," says Chris Suvan, son of Norm. "We expect celebrations to centre on a hard-fought game against our archrivals, the Edmonton Clansman, another club founded by Davie Graham."

Steak will be served at the clubs' grounds at 3004 92nd Street.

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