



RP patients see their future through laughter

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Blindness is no funny matter, but 18-year-old Gavin Morrison hopes laughter will one day help him regain his sight.

When he was just five years old, Morrison's parents noticed that he was walking into walls and other objects at night time. Shortly after, he was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP), a hereditary disease that strikes children and young adults resulting in a progressive and narrowing tunnel vision, which can ultimately lead to blindness.

"It's a degenerative disease, so you might start off with almost perfect vision when you are younger, but then it progressively gets worse," explains Morrison, a first year University of Western Ontario business management and organizational studies student. Morrison says he cannot see in the dark and this sometimes causes him to walk into objects.

"It affects my life and I have to adjust to it at school and social situations. But I get by and I ask for help," he adds.

There are 30,000 people living with RP in Canada and 3,000 are diagnosed yearly. Though treatment has yet to be found, Morrison and his family are hoping to make a cure in sight through their annual fundraising event Comic Vision.

The event, co-founded by Morrison's mother 10 years ago, features performances by some of Canada's top comedians and is now one of the country's much anticipated annual social gatherings.

Morrison says the success that the event has seen in its 10 years is "truly inspirational."

"It started out small with one event and every year it got bigger and bigger with more people and spread to more cities and now it's in five cities across Canada," he explains.

With audiences in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, London and Oakville, Comic Vision has raised more than \$2.7 million for the Foundation Fighting Blindness, a national charity funding vision research at hospitals and universities across Canada. The research will "help fund a cure that will help me and thousand of million's of people like me across the world," says Morrison.

Comic Vision 2011 will come to Oakville on April 27 at Le Dome and will feature comedians Graham Chittenden, James Cunningham and Debra DiGiovanni. Complimentary beer, wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served at the event. Guests can also bid in the live auction and participate in fundraising games. Tickets are \$150 each or \$1,500 for a table. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.comicvision.ca.



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