

Colitis patient raises \$80,000 for research

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After Sarah Scully was diagnosed as a young teenager with ulcerative colitis, a disease that can leave its victims suffering from bouts of intense pain and bloody diarrhea, she was determined to keep up with her busy schedule.

As a student at Earl Haig Secondary School, she was on the basketball, track and field, swimming and triathlon teams. She sat on the athletic council and, in her graduation year at the school, served as its co-president. She was also a member of the business council.

It was only after she would finish her hectic days at school that Scully would come home and allow herself to face her illness.

"I put on a brave face and then came home and let myself feel it," said the North York woman, who lives near Sheppard and Bayview avenues.

"I didn't want to be seen not being able to handle it."

But Scully has done more than handle her disease. She has raised more than \$80,000 for the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada's annual Heel 'n' Wheel-a-thon, which raises money for research into inflammatory bowel disease.

On Sunday, Scully, her mother, Ruth, father, Rick, and 18-year-old brother, Adam, who was diagnosed with Crohn's disease in January, will take part in this year's event at Sunnybrook Park at Eglinton Avenue and Leslie Street.

"It's really a great cause (because the disease) affects a lot of Canadians. Every bit of money the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation can get goes to research," she said.

Scully, now 20 and working with the events and promotions department of Molson Coors Canada, was just a budding teenager when she was diagnosed with ulcerative colitis.

"I was formally diagnosed when I was 13. That was January 2003. In the fall of 2002, I was experiencing severe stomach pain along with very frequent and bloody diarrhea, which is a common symptom for many people not yet diagnosed with colitis," she said.

"It came out of the blue. There had been no previous (family) history with Crohn's and colitis. It was a little bit scary. I thought (before being diagnosed) that it was maybe something I had eaten and my stomach was reacting. But it went on for three or four months before I got in to see a gastroenterologist."

Despite the challenges her disease has caused, Scully has been determined not to let it slow her down.

"To be honest, I had a colonoscopy (to diagnose the illness) on a Friday but on Saturday, I was horseback riding. I didn't take the diagnosis really hard," said Scully, who limits her diet and takes medications to manage her disease..

"It's always in the back of my mind in what I can eat and not eat but I haven't let it take over my life."



Sarah Scully. Sarah Scully has raised \$80,000 for the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation of Canada. The foundation holds its Heel 'n' Wheel-a-thon Sunday June 13 at Sunnybrook Park. Photo/COURTESY

Scully studied for a year at Dalhousie University before returning to Toronto to take classes at George Brown College. She is returning to George Brown this fall.

"(These days), I will get symptoms every once in a while," she said.

"I have no idea where the disease will take me. I can be healthy today and sick as a dog tomorrow. I knew I could overcome it and live my life."

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