Annual fundraiser for CF to occur Saturday

DAVID JOHNSON
CityNews Editor

On September 26, university students will once again take to the streets to shine up the spring in their step — and that of those around them.

This Saturday marks the 85th anniversary of Shriners, a national annual program designed to raising awareness for cystic fibrosis, as well as to raise money in exchange for fluorescent publishing.

For Christina Yang and Jillian Popel, the organizers of the Shriners initiative at the University this year, the combination of shoe-shining and cystic fibrosis points at a deep-rooted connection between the two.

"It's very interesting," noted Yang, a second-year medical student. "I don't know how that first person came up with that idea, but here we are today."

She elaborated that the campaign began at Western University in 1964 during their Orientation week, and has evolved over the decades into Canada's largest postsecondary fundraiser.

"It's the shining of shoes isn't the end-all of the event, but a hook on which to raise awareness."

"But I think in general don't really know what cystic fibrosis is," Popel added. "Before I got into university, even, I didn't really know. You hear about it and know they have problems with their lungs, but that's about it — a lot of people don't know."

Popel had her eyes opened when she volunteered two years ago at the University of Guelph's Shoe Day, the projecition event that led her to re-organizing the cross-city extravaganza.

"This year we're actually aiming for more than 700 [volunteers] — it's really kind of a show-up-on-the-day and see what happens."

CHRISTINA YANG
Shriners Organizer

They're not alone in the endeavour, however.

"We have a committee of maybe 20 other medical students who work so hard — setting up the locations, organizing everything, recruiting volunteers, financial work [...] It's really a team effort, it's not just the two of us," Popel said. And that doesn't count the army of volunteer shiners pulled from university students on the day — consisting of anyone who shows up at Celebration Plaza at 8:30 on the morning of September 26.

"Last year, we had over 500 volunteers," Yang said, who participated in the Shoe Days at the Guelph campus last fall. "This year, we're actually aiming for more than 700, at least. We'll kind of see how it goes — it's really kind of a show-up-on-the-day and see what happens."

Both Yang and Popel agree that the event has the potential to be bigger and brighter — although last year's proceeds of $15,000 may seem large, they pale in comparison to the more than $100,000 Western Ontario University pulls in every year. Their Shriners event is co-ordinated through their Students' Union, possibly setting a precedent for the U of A.

"It is a pacy well despite not having that kind of support," Popel noted. "Since 1985, we've been raising money for Shriners."

Indeed, both Popel and Yang are optimistic for a weekend of bright shoes and opened eyes towards cystic fibrosis. This year's goal is $30,000, and organizers hope the sun shines to help them reach that target.

"We have our fingers crossed for beautiful weather," Popel laugh. "But even if we don't, how can it be the time."

To volunteer for Shriners, interested students can visit MICM.ca, or show up to Celebration Plaza this Saturday, ready to bring a little more shine to the city.

Conference focus: robotics

BIG CONTROVERSY

"The stuff you're doing is actually for something [...] The results might surprise you."

The GIBM competition has also allowed students to learn about the business side of research according to David Lloyd, a fourth-year biochemistry student at the.

"There's a lot of ways you can get involved in a business sense, and in a financial sense," he said.

But some of the lessons have been learned the hard way, as the current economic turmoil has had a direct impact on investment and donations not only for the University of Guelph but also for teams around the world.

"The other problem is the economic circumstances. It's pretty rough this year to try to raise money," Ellison said. "It's pretty hard when you're from a developing country and there's been a massive economic collapse."

Nevertheless, the team feels that the quality of this year's project and enthusiasm for the competition has not been adversely affected.

"This year, we are really aiming for the big ones," Ellison added. "We've put a lot of effort into this. We're going down to win."