

Sam's Day celebrates birthday, remission

Boy battling neuroblastoma

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Dancing, singing and clowning around are part of Sam's Day -- a fitting tribute to an energetic Burlington youngster who has been battling a rare childhood cancer.

Sam Lack, who turns three today (Sunday), is described by his aunt as a typical youngster, who's very active with lots of energy.

"Sam is actually larger than life itself. He's quite the charmer," said Jill Davies. "He's a great spokesperson because he's pretty cute."

Sam's Day will be held next Saturday (June 10) to celebrate the youngster's third birthday and the first anniversary of his remission from neuroblastoma, a childhood cancer that affects cells forming parts of the nervous system and causes tumors.

The event will be held from 1-4 p.m. at the Brant Hills Community Centre. Attractions will include children's performers and entertainment, a silent auction, draws and more.

"It's his birthday party every year," said Davies. "We have a big cake to feed 400 people and everybody gets to sing Happy Birthday."

Sam's Day organizers hope to raise \$25,000 for the James Fund for Neuroblastoma Research at Toronto's Sick Kids Hospital. The fund honours the memory of James Birrell, who died at age 8 after a lengthy battle with neuroblastoma.

"The money goes to a good cause, but we're giving a lot of good value," said Davies, who organized the event with Sam's mother, Andrea. "A full family can come out and not have to spend that much."

A Sam's Day family pass costs \$25, while single adult admission costs \$10. The event is focused on fun, family values and making time for families to go out, said Davies.

"When a child has cancer, it directly affects the whole family," she said. "But Sam hasn't had any longterm physical challenges and they're continuing to monitor him for cancer and residual effects."

The youngster's family (which includes parents Andrea and Jay and



RIDING A PATH TO RECOVERY A DAY FOR SAM: Sam Lack, who turns three today (Sunday), will be the special guest of honour at Sam's Day, a June 10 party at Brant Hills Community Centre celebrating the youngster's birthday and his one-year anniversary of being in remission from neuroblastoma, a rare childhood cancer.



Sam Lack

brother Ben, 7) learned Sam had cancer when he was 19 months.

Davies said a grapefruit-sized lump was found in Sam's abdomen during a routine doctor's checkup. She said chemotherapy treatment at McMaster Children's Hospital did not stop the tumour from growing. Sam was then taken to Sick Kids Hospital in Toronto.

"In March, 2005 they did an eight-hour surgery which was a success," said Davies. "They removed part of his small bowel and were successful in getting all of the tumour out."

She said neuroblastoma affects children under five and is usually acquired in the infant stage, but can go undetected. About 25 children per year are diagnosed with the disease in Ontario.

"Typically, there are no symptoms, so it often spreads elsewhere," said Davies. "In Sam's case, there was nothing to tip off that he was very sick."

She said the majority of those diagnosed after age one have widespread cancer and only 20-25 per cent of those children survive for more than five years.

"We need research to give the kids a better chance," said Davies.

Attractions at the upcoming Sam's Day include the Top Hat Orchestra, White Pine Dancers, Ben DL singing for kids, juggling by Corrie the Clown, Sam's birthday cake with special guests and the Sam's story show, Loraine Bedini Dance Studio hip hop performers, Muhtadi and the World Drummers, Patty Cake's puppetry and the Brad MacDonald U2 Finale with Sam's song.

There will also be a silent auction for a baby gift basket, children's bicycle, a golf package, hotel stay, gift certificates and numerous other items. A barbecue donated by Canadian Tire will also be raffled off.

Other attractions will include an outdoor auto show, Home Depot workshop, Doodle Art station, Discovery Toys PlayZone and Papa Hershey's train.

To order tickets, call Andrea Lack at 905-632-4471 or send an e-mail to andrea@samsday.org.

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