

Tournament 'better every year'

MIKE

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That never happened.

On June 12, 1984, the day Mike was supposed to graduate, he died peacefully at the Montreal Children's Hospital while surrounded by his family and close friends. He was 20 years old.

"By the time he died, he couldn't lift his hand to his mouth," recalled Wilson, who still has trouble talking about Mike's death. "His muscles had totally deteriorated."

Shortly after his death, Wilson and some of Mike's friends decided they wanted to do something to keep his memory alive. Wilson and Gary McLarnon approached Mike's father with the idea of organizing a charity softball tournament.

The following June, the Mike Reid Memorial Softball Tournament was born with 16 teams taking part. Beginning tomorrow and running through Sunday, the 14th annual event will take place at Pierre Laporte Park in Greenfield Park, with 32 teams competing for the Michael Reid Memorial Trophy

"The event has been getting bigger and better every year," said Wilson, who is part of the tournament organizing committee along with McLarnon, Tim Matuzewski, Raymond Lee, Mike's father, his mother, Linda Kirby, and his sister, Kathy.

Over the years, the tournament has raised more than \$185,000 for the Mackay Centre and the Centre of Activity, Recreation and Education (CARE), a special program for people who have graduated from the Mackay Centre. The money is used to finance events that government funding is unable to subsidize.

"One particularly memorable event for the children was a bus trip to Toronto to see Phantom of the Opera," Wilson said. "We feel these types of opportunities are vital aspects in the development of these children's lives."

And last year, with the help of money raised from the softball tournament, the Mackay Centre opened the Michael Reid Memorial Resource Centre.

"We're trying to provide materials on different disabilities that children might have to help parents and staff better understand them," said Sandy

Goldberg, who oversees the resource centre for the Mackay Centre. "We've been able to buy books, a computer, periodicals, videos, things like that."

"The Reids are an amazing family," she added, "and Frank Reid is an amazing gentleman to have kept this going."

But Reid isn't looking for any praise for the work he and his family have done for the Mackay Centre. He just wants to help keep the memory of his only son alive.

"I'm proud of what's happened since Mike died and what's been done in his memory," Reid said. "This (softball tournament) is an event he would have really enjoyed being a part of."

But the annual tournament can also be an emotional time for Mike's family and friends.

"I think it's a little more emotional for Wade and Mike's friends," Reid said, "because I don't need this tournament to remember Mike by. Not only was he my son, he was my close buddy. We spent a lot of time together and I have a lot of memories."

"Sometimes at the closing banquet it's tough for me emotionally," he added. "But I'm just really proud of who Mike was."