

SOUND OFF

REMEMBERING
MIKE REID

Softball tourney shows how good people respond when bad things happen



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Reid Memorial Softball Tournament will be held at Pierre Laporte Park in Greenfield Park, with 32 men's teams and 10 women's teams taking part. There will also be a golf tournament Friday morning at St. Césaire and a dance Friday night at Greenfield Park's Cynthia Coull Arena. The charity event has raised about \$600,000 over the years in aid of the Mackay Centre School for deaf and disabled children.

The tournament has been a labour of love for Frank and his family. But this year it will be different. Frank suffered a stroke last year and now has problems communicating.

Sometimes life really doesn't seem fair.

"It's going to be hard," Frank's daughter, Kathryn, told me about her father's health heading into this year's tournament. "But we're still going to do good things."

Kathryn has many fond memories of her big brother.

"To me, he was my big brother, whether he was handicapped or not," she said. "He was always my big brother ... I kind of idolized him and followed him around."

That included going to watch her father play with the Greenfield Park Legion softball team, of which Mike was the coach and statistician.

"Going down to the field and watching him coach the team, it was unbelievable," Kathryn recalled. "I remember one time we were crossing the street, coming home from a game, and some guy was staring at Mike, and he shouted out at the guy: 'What are you looking at?' He was that type of guy ... he never saw himself handicapped."

Wade Wilson, who was Mike's best friend and heads the tournament organizing committee, recalled how Mike was a huge Boston Bruins fan and loved Bobby Orr. Wheelchair hockey was his favourite participation sport, but he loved watching all sports and dreamed of one day becoming a TV sportscaster.

Mike became the Quebec poster child for Jerry Lewis's annual Labour Day



COURTESY OF THE REID FAMILY

Mike Reid, who loved Bobby Orr and the Boston Bruins, dreamed of becoming a TV sportscaster. He died in 1984 at age 20 from muscular dystrophy.

One of the cruel facts of life is that bad things too often happen to good people. But it's amazing how good people can turn bad things into something good.

I'll never forget a conversation I had with Frank Reid on a warm summer night in 1998, while we were teammates in the Greenfield Park Over the Hill Softball League. After a game, I sat with Frank and he told me the story about his son, Mike, who was only 20 when he died on June 12, 1984, after a lifelong battle with Duchennes muscular dystrophy.

Frank knew something was wrong with Mike when he was about 3 years old – he just didn't know what.

"He had difficulty walking," Frank told me as his eyes started to moisten. "He was slow and he would fall down a lot. He just didn't seem to be normal physically."

For the next 17 years, Reid watched this terrible disease eat away at his son's muscles, eventually putting him in leg braces and then a wheelchair, before killing him.

"He never complained," Frank told me that night. "He was happy in his limited life."

Five months after that conversation, my first child was born, and I thought about Frank and Mike Reid and counted my blessings that I had a healthy child. I now have two healthy children and continue to count my blessings.

Beginning this Thursday, and continuing through Sunday, the 25th annual Mike

muscular-dystrophy telethon, and in 1982 received the Mackay Centre's Prudence Baxter Award for scholastic achievement. Mike died on the day he was supposed to graduate from the school.

"By the time he died, he couldn't lift his hand to his mouth," Wilson recalled. "His muscles had totally deteriorated."

But his name lives on at the Mackay Centre thanks to the Michael Reid Memorial Resource Centre.

"It was just like a normal school to him," Kathryn said. "They used to go on field trips. He loved gym, he loved playing hockey. A school like that really helped him to be normal, because he had math, he had gym, he had every kind of class that normal kids have. They did so much for him, it was incredible. His old classroom is the resource room now."

"That's where the money (from the soft-

ball tournament) goes, to keep the resource room going and help pay for field trips. The parents, when they used to bring their kids to physio and stuff, would end up sitting in the parking lot. Those kids and parents needed someplace to go. That's why we made the resource room. It has computers so they can look up the diagnosis and the prognosis of all of their children with their diseases. They have somewhere to go."

Frank Reid has trouble communicating now, but before our conversation ended on that summer night 11 years ago, he said:

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

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