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From Bicycles to the Boardroom Table: How a Peterborough Man Raises Funds and Awareness for Huntington Disease
Celebrating National Volunteer Week: April 23-29, 2017

(KITCHENER, ON) April 19, 2017 – Volunteers are at the heart of the Huntington Society of Canada (HSC). Our volunteers tell a powerful story of caring people who pull together to improve the quality of life for Canadians impacted by Huntington disease (HD). To celebrate National Volunteer Week (April 23-29), the Huntington Society of Canada is honouring Heath’s volunteer work in Ontario’s Peterborough region and the impact he makes in the HD community.

Heath Sterling was fresh out of high school when his mom was diagnosed with Huntington disease (HD) — a fatal, inherited neurodegenerative disease. “It was a big shock to our family because we really had no idea that Huntington’s was in our family,” he recalls. “My natural instinct was to just get as involved as I can.”

So the teenager rallied some friends and signed up for a triathlon to raise money for the HD cause. That effort got him on the front page of the Peterborough Examiner’s sports page — and kicked off more than two decades of contributions as a volunteer.

Heath helped organize a successful HD Indy Go-Kart Challenge fundraiser. He signed up for clinical trials. He became the president of the Huntington Society of Canada’s Toronto chapter and served on the national board of directors for three years. He launched the Toronto Sports Getaway Raffle, and since its inception it has consistently raised more than \$10,000 for the Society each year. Last but not least, he has put his technology savvy to work for the organization, improving their website.

Meanwhile, as one of the spokespeople in the Society’s Public Service Announcement, he’s raising awareness about the disease that affects families like his from coast to coast. “I’m happy to do as much as I can to help the cause,” he says.

Today, Heath has moved back to his hometown to be closer to his family as his mom’s HD progresses. He’s also taken on the role of president for the Peterborough chapter, helping organize an annual Walk to Cure HD event in May and prepare to host an HD Symposium this fall.

As a busy father of two young children, Heath doesn’t have as much time as he once did to volunteer. That’s why he’s recruiting a new generation of passionate volunteers to the chapter, introducing them to the joys of contributing to a great cause. “To see the younger folks get involved has been super-rewarding,” he says.

From April 23 to 29, Volunteer Canada and the Huntington Society of Canada celebrate Canada’s 12.7 million volunteers during National Volunteer Week (NVW). This year marks the 76th year Volunteer Canada has been recognizing the hardworking volunteers that make a difference in Canada. It has grown to be the largest celebration of civic participation in Canada. Help us celebrate National Volunteer Week in Canada.

Huntington disease (HD) is a debilitating brain disorder that is fatal and incurable. About one in every 7,000 Canadians has HD and approximately one in every 5,500 is at-risk of developing the disease. Many more are touched by HD whether as a caregiver, a family member, or a friend. HD causes cells in specific parts of the brain to die. As the disease progresses, a person with Huntington's become less able to manage movements, recall events, make decisions and control emotions. The disease leads to incapacitation and, eventually, death.

The **Huntington Society of Canada (HSC)** is a respected leader in the worldwide effort to end Huntington disease. HSC is the only Canadian health charity dedicated to providing help and hope for families dealing with Huntington disease across Canada.

Volunteer Canada (www.volunteer.ca)

Involved Canadians build strong and connected communities to create a vibrant Canada. Volunteer Canada provides national leadership and expertise on volunteerism to increase the participation, quality and diversity of volunteer experiences. Since 1977, Volunteer Canada has worked closely with a network of more than 200 volunteer centres across Canada, over 1200 Volunteer Canada members, charitable and nonprofit organizations, businesses, educational institutions, and government departments.

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