

# Cancer patient, 17, carries the torch and helps other afflicted youngsters

## Student to take turn in relay three days before her chemotherapy

BY BRENDA BRANSWELL, CANWEST NEWS SERVICE DECEMBER 1, 2009

Sarah Cook's stretch of the Olympic torch relay is about 300 metres on Montreal's St.-Denis Street. She'll be walking, not running, in the white track suit, white hat and red mitts that arrived by courier.

"One leg is shorter so I have a little bit of a limp," said Cook, 17.

Her fibula, a bone in the lower leg, was removed when she was first diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma at age eight.

"I've never been the fastest runner in the world," said Cook with a laugh.

She'll be having a busy week when she carries the torch on Dec. 10. On Dec. 13, she has a chemotherapy session to treat the cancer that has recurred. On Dec. 14 and 15, she has two end-of-term exams at Lower Canada College where she is a pre-university student.

"I'm excited," she said. "I really hope I don't drop the torch."

Cook learned last summer soon after her high school graduation that the cancer had come back.

"It was definitely hard because I was really excited to go to Neuchatel," she said of the junior college in Switzerland.

But you don't hear self-pity and why-me in her voice. She looked good late last week and laughed easily. Having been down this road before, Sarah said she has learned to go with the flow.

"I've accepted the fact that 'OK, it's just one more year.' Things are put on hold. You can always do stuff later."

When she applied to be a torchbearer earlier this fall, she wrote about the Sarah Cook Fund of the Cedars Cancer Institute for Children.

It was set up by her parents Lorena and Norman after she first got sick. During her hospital stay then, Sarah found the pillows lumpy and wanted new ones for the kids on the 8D floor.

But the fund blossomed far beyond the "little fund" to buy pillows that the family had envisioned.

It has raised more than \$4.5 million to date, through its own fundraising events including the annual Splash and Dash event held this month and also through Cedars.

The money from Sarah's Fund goes to the hematology/oncology division at the hospital.

"We couldn't say thank you enough to all these people for saving Sarah and all that they do for all these other families," said Lorena.

The fund partnered with the Children's Hospital Foundation to renovate 8D, now called "Sarah's Floor."

The upgrades to Sarah's Floor include flat-screen televisions and sofas that extend into beds. Patients have their own bathrooms and some rooms have Internet connections with web cameras that families from out of town can use to call home.

The fund has also helped pay for an intraoperative MRI machine at the hospital -- the first installed in a pediatric hospital in Canada.

Its other contributions include annual donations for continuing education for nurses.

"It's amazing that we've been able to raise that much money. So many people are involved," Sarah said.

She has met cyclist and cancer survivor Lance Armstrong at fundraising events in Montreal. When he heard last summer that her cancer had returned, Armstrong had a message for Sarah in a video posted on his website during the Tour de France.

"Sarah we're thinking about you and hoping you do great," Armstrong said.

"I was really amazed that he even knew about it," Sarah said.

Sarah doesn't want to be "the child with cancer," said Lorena.

"She is, but she continues to look outside herself to help others with cancer. And I think that's the core of what this is about: [people] helping people."

For more information about the Sarah Cook Fund of the Cedars Cancer Institute for Children, visit [www.cedars.ca/cedars/en/sarah\\_cook\\_fund/founder](http://www.cedars.ca/cedars/en/sarah_cook_fund/founder).

- today, on Day 33, the torch is in Quebec

Baie-Comeau, 7:09 a.m.

Chute-aux-Outardes, 7:57 a.m.

Ragueneau, 8:13 a.m.

Pessamit, 8:46 a.m.

Forestville, 10:11 a.m.

Portneuf-sur-Mer, 10:46 a.m.

Longue-Rive, 11:17 a.m.

Les Escoumins, 12:07 p.m.

Essipit, 1:31 p.m.

Sacr -Coeur, 2:28 p.m.

Saint-Fulgence, 4:04 p.m.

Chicoutimi, 5:02 p.m.

Saguenay (Jonqui re), 6:09 p.m.

- today, on Day 34 the torch is in Quebec

Alma, 6:50 a.m.

Saint-Coeur-de-Marie, 7:40 a.m.

Sainte-Monique-de-Honfleur, 8:08 a.m.

Dolbeau-Mistassini, 8:58 a.m.

Saint-F licien, 10:37 a.m.

Saint-Prime, 11:22 a.m.

Mashteuiatsh, 11:44 a.m.

Roberval, 12:15 p.m.

Chambord, 2:02 p.m.

Desbiens, 2:48 p.m.

MÉtabetchouan-Lac-ý-la-Croix, 3:06 p.m.

HÉbertville, 3:31 p.m.

QuÉbec City, 6:47 p.m.

- today's notable torchbearer: veronique canuel, forestville

Veronique Canuel was a figure skater throughout her childhood and teen years. She dreamed of one day being in the Olympic Games. Today, she is a figure skating official and judge, and she works to promote the sport among young people.

- By the numbers

The torch will travel 45,000 km, visit more than 1,000 communities and be carried by 12,000 torchbearers over its 106-day journey.

Here are the numbers at the end of Day 32:

- Communities visited: 299

- Torchbearers: 3,106

- Kilometres travelled: 21,845.5

- Kilometres travelled Monday: 174

- Kilometres today: 336

- did you know?

Chicoutimi, population 62, 670, was

the birthplace of Montreal Canadiens goalie Georges Vezina, who played for the team between 1910 and 1925. The Vezina Trophy, awarded annually to the top goaltender in the National Hockey League, is named after him.

- Bearing the torch

Organizers say the torch will travel in 100 different ways during the relay. Here's what we've seen so far:

- plane
- foot
- car
- canoe
- bike
- rowing scull
- logging truck
- surf board
- skateboard
- wheelchair
- sno-cat
- dogsled
- snowshoes
- chuckwagon
- tundra buggy
- Newfoundland dory
- curling ice
- Zamboni
- crutches
- Bluenose II schooner
- horse-drawn carriage
- buffalo mine clearing vehicle

More torch coverage at [vancouver.sun.com/torch](http://vancouver.sun.com/torch)

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