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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

At 27, Benny is getting better

Monday, June 16, 2008

The June 7-8 weekend marked the 27th time that St. Joseph's Foundation of Thunder Bay held its annual birthday party for Benny Birch. This is an unusually long run for a fundraiser of any type let alone one that is based on a rather simple concept of a birthday party for an imaginary tree.

Over those years the organizers of this event have had their share of challenges; everything from having to move locations to having amusements rides cancel and of course there's always the weather to worry about. This year was no different. Friday's torrent of rain made the Chippewa grounds soggy and unfortunately, that evening's festivities had to be cancelled. There was also plenty of competition this year for people's time and money from other worthwhile and deserving charities.

But once again Benny Birch's Birthday Party proved to be a great success. This is due to the efforts of many different organizations and individuals including the directors and staff of St. Joseph's Foundation, the staff of St. Joseph's Care Group and their network of friends and family who always seem eager to help out. Since the move to Chippewa, the City of Thunder Bay Parks and Recreation Department has been a huge help in staging this event and really needs to be commended for its cooperation.

Most importantly, however, we need to thank all of you. A community event like this one could only be successful with the support and generosity of the people of Thunder Bay. Many who attended as children when it first began now bring their own kids. They keep coming year after year to join in this simple concept. Perhaps it's to eat a bit of fudge or cotton candy, to snap a photo with Benny, to take a ride on the roller coaster or just to have the opportunity to spend some time as a family and to share in a real sense of community.

Way to go Benny. You're not getting older, you're getting better.

Pat Charlebois
Chair, Benny Birch organizing committee
Thunder Bay

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