



**Thunder Bay Regional
Health Sciences
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Northern
Cancer Fund



Northern
Cardiac Fund



Health Sciences
Discovery Fund

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Media Release – For Immediate Release

Freedom 55 Financial Thunder Bay Hockey Celebrity Golf Classic Celebrates Impact After Nine Memorable Years

The Freedom 55 Financial Thunder Bay Hockey Celebrity Golf Classic has concluded its operations. In the nine years the tournament has run, a remarkable \$307,510 was raised for the Northern Cancer Fund through the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation. Funds supported critical equipment purchases at Regional Cancer Care Northwest.

“It has always been about having a quality experience, and giving back to our community” said Tom Mihaljevic, Director, Business Development, Freedom 55 Financial, and Organizing Committee, Freedom 55 Financial Thunder Bay Hockey Celebrity Golf Classic. “After nine successful years running this tournament, the organizing committee determined it was time to turn our attention to new endeavours, but we are undeniably proud of what has taken place in the tournament’s history.”

Started in 2006 by a small group, the first tournament came together quickly with organizers having only weeks to prepare for the event. That first year, \$25,000 was raised. “We were all a little surprised – in a good way,” commented Mihaljevic. “It was decided pretty much right away that we needed, and wanted, to do it again.”

So, with much energy and enthusiasm, the next year’s event was planned, with each subsequent year raising more and more money.

“We really picked up our fundraising efforts with the support of Freedom 55 Financial as our presenting sponsor,” said Bob Swan, Organizing Committee.

With a commitment to build stronger communities together, Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life have supported the tournament annually since 2006. Staff, management and advisors from the Thunder Bay office of Freedom 55 Financial, a division of London Life, devoted their time and enthusiasm as organizers, volunteers and leaders to help ensure the success of the event.

“Plus,” added Swan, “we had Blaine Carlson as our emcee most years – he’d get you to open your wallet whether you wanted it open or not!”



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“One of the key things about this particular tournament, and its ongoing success, was that it brought together many hockey professionals from the city. It was a real homecoming, with celebrities, both past and present, coming to the event. We had players and coaches from the NHL, the Thunderwolves, European teams, and the OHL,” remarked Mihaljevic. “You could sense the feeling of camaraderie on and off the course when all these guys got together. It was like a dressing-room type atmosphere, with good-natured ribbing and lots of laughter. The competitive spirit also made for some fantastic bidding wars! Altogether, we hosted over 60 celebrities.”

“The event’s location was also critical,” said Swan. “In the early years, we were one of the first groups to play at the newly-opened Whitewater Golf Club, and the tournament was there ever since. The staff bent over backwards to ensure the course was always in top shape and they took care of our guests exceptionally well.”

“We had great sponsors and volunteers too,” added Mihaljevic. “They were dedicated and approached us each year asking how they could help out again, and again, and again. That commitment didn’t go unnoticed by our committee, by the participants in the event or those at Regional Cancer Care Northwest – all of whom were very grateful.

“I think,” added Mihaljevic, “that the legacy of this event is that we’ll never know the impact we’ve had on someone’s life, but we’ll know we’ve had an impact. And it might be generational, because the cancer care equipment that’s helped save someone’s life today might ensure that person is around to meet their grandkids. It’s a pretty indescribable feeling and I think everyone involved in this event, whether as a player, a sponsor, or a volunteer, can be joyful that we have had this impact.”

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About Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life

Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life offer a broad portfolio of financial and benefit plan solutions, and serve the financial security needs of more than 12 million people across Canada. Responsible and ethical management is an intrinsic value of the companies and is essential to long-term profitability and value creation. As an Imagine Caring Company supporting the principles of corporate citizenship and benchmarks for community investment established by Imagine Canada, the companies donate a minimum of one per cent of average pre-tax profits to non-profit, charitable and community organizations each year.

Learn more about the organization's corporate social responsibility at http://www.greatwestlife.com/001/Home/Corporate_Information/CorporateSocialResponsibility/index.htm

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