

Fundraiser helps bring new treatment

BY JEREMY WARREN, THE STARPHOENIX OCTOBER 11, 2011

Choc'laCure is a sweet fundraiser that has donated more than \$500,000 to the Saskatoon Cancer Centre and now it aims to raise money for specialized cancer treatment equipment not currently available in Saskatchewan.

This year the group has decided to raise money for a stereotactic radiosurgery unit, which allows medical staff to deliver a concentrated and precise dose of radiation to tumours, specifically brain tumours and ailments. Choc'laCure is helping the Saskatoon Cancer Centre bring the \$4-million unit to Saskatchewan for the first time.

Choc'laCure fundraising chair Shelley Gregg said having the equipment in Saskatchewan would mean less out-of-province travel for patients requiring radiosurgery.

"We know people that needed this treatment and they had to travel or they chose not take it because it would take them away from their support systems here," Gregg said. "We know the expense and hardship of travelling for medical treatment."

The new equipment will also benefit medical students at the University of Saskatchewan and help the province recruit and retain medical specialists, she said.

Gregg said the provincial government gave the centre the go-ahead to bring the equipment to Saskatchewan, leaving the funding as the only obstacle. "They have the staff and they have the space already," she said.

The group's annual gala event in November could raise more than \$180,000 for the centre, based on past fundraising efforts. The Nov. 4 gala takes place at Dutch Growers Garden Centre and features silent and live auctions, dinner by The Ivy and live entertainment.

The gala has raised about \$185,000 for the cancer centre in each of the past three years, mostly through donations from individuals and small Saskatoon businesses, Gregg said.

"It's a grassroots campaign," she said. "It would be nice to get the big corporate donors, but we've been very fortunate to have the support of many local businesses."

Choc'laCure started five years ago with a small group of people raising money with chocolates and desserts for breast cancer research. Within a few years, the group expanded its fundraising focus to general cancer treatment so that it could help men, women and children through support for the cancer Centre, which is part of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

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