



LIVING > HERO > FACTS

LOCAL HERO



JIM ROSS FOR THE TORONTO STAR

Ann Morrison, right, has raised \$800,000 to research a degenerative eye disease that afflicts her son Gavin.

Inspired by a son's plight

ANDREA GORDON
LIVING REPORTER**WHO:** Ann Morrison, 44, Burlington, a mechanical engineer, mother of three and a fundraiser for The Foundation Fighting Blindness.**WHAT:** Morrison founded and now manages the annual fundraiser Comic Vision and has raised more than \$810,000 for research into retinitis pigmentosa (RP), macular degeneration and related retinal diseases since it launched eight years ago.**WHERE:** It started with a one-night show in Toronto in 1999, returned three years later and has been an annual tradition ever since.

In 2005, Comic Vision expanded to two nights in Toronto and Oakville and, by 2006, it was up to three, including London. In April the fundraising event added a fourth performance to its schedule, in Vancouver.

WHY: Morrison and her husband

David were devastated when, at the age of 5, their eldest child Gavin was diagnosed with RP, an incurable degenerative eye disease. They attended a conference of The Foundation Fighting Blindness and were inspired to help raise research money and educate people about RP and other eye diseases. Now 14, Gavin can see in daylight but not in low lighting, when dusk begins to fall or at night. He's an A student and avid reader who goes to summer camp, loves to swim and snowboard. This year he wrote and delivered his own speech at Comic Vision.

HOW: When Morrison broke the news about Gavin's diagnosis and the need for RP research to the women in her mothers' group, her friend and part-time comic Meg Soper had an idea: "Let's do a fundraiser." Soper promised to get the comedians if Morrison took care of the rest and has performed at every

Comic Vision event since. When the Vancouver site was added, two women from the original moms' group, who had since moved out west, headed the organizing committee.

SUCCESS SO FAR: In its first year, Comic Vision sold 200 tickets and raised \$7,800. This year it raised \$389,000 over four nights. Morrison, now on staff at the foundation, says the key is folks have a blast. "People love to laugh. They come out with mascara running down their faces. . . . Once someone comes, they're hooked, they don't want to get off the mailing list." Her goal: to make it the "Run for the Cure" of comedy fundraising.**QUOTE:** "Research is not sexy, but it's so important to know we are making a difference."**FIND OUT MORE:** Visit comicvision.ca and ffb.ca

Send submission for your Local Hero to thestar.com

HOW WE LIVE

MREs popular fodder

*Some facts and figures about life in Canada.***92**

Percentage of Canadians who buy meals, ready-to-eat (MRE)

40

Ontario's estimated share of total employment in Canada.

1.2

Average employment growth in Canada.

62

Percentage of Canadians who believe climate change can be reversed.

86.7 billion

Number of kilometres Canadian drivers cover between July and September, the busiest time of the year to be on the roads.

30,321

Number of Canadian couples getting married in August.

48 minutes

Average waiting time for submitting an application in person at a Passport Canada offices.

598

Number of LCBO stores in Ontario.

1,722,112

Number of would-be LCBO customers challenged in 2005/2006 for proof of age or sobriety. Eighty per cent of customers challenged for proof of age were deemed to be too young.

130

Number of Toronto restaurants participating in Summerlicious.

8

Number of times Canada has played in FIFA U-20 World Cup tournaments.

52

Number of matches scheduled for FIFA U-20 World Cup Canada.

40,000

Estimated number of people in attendance at the opening ceremonies of the Royal Ontario Museum's Michael Lee-Chin Crystal.

Compiled by: Jo-Anne Petropoulos
Sources: Star Files, Toronto Zoo, Statistics Canada, ACNielsen, Passport Canada, City of Toronto, ROM, and LCBO

MIKE FIALA/APFILE PHOTO

Ready-to-eat meals end up in the shopping carts of 92 per cent of Canadians.

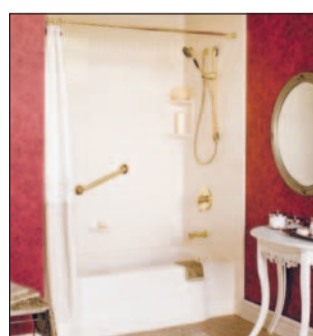
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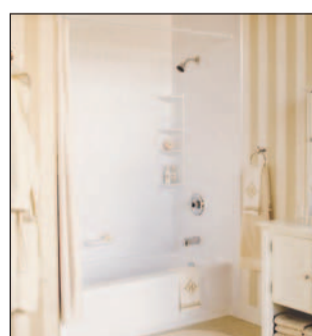
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