

# Fashion show pays homage to late actor

RITA DeMONTIS  
Sun Media

"I dream that the word 'cure' will no longer be followed by the words 'it's impossible.'"

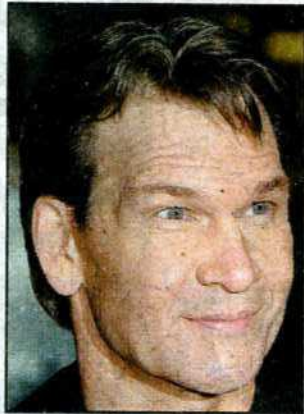
It was this powerful quote by the late Patrick Swayze that galvanized members of Pancreatic Cancer Canada (PCC), a national voluntary association, and the Ladies Auxiliary of the Canadian Italian Business and Professional Association (CIBPA), to organize a special fundraising event that would not only honour the actor, but pay tribute to his work — and his awe-inspiring dance moves, too.

Fundraising organizers took Swayze's famous role in the movie *Dirty Dancing* and turned it into the theme for a recent fashion show in order

to raise awareness and funds for what is considered the fourth leading cause of cancer death in Canada — and one of the most lethal.

November is considered Pancreatic Cancer Month, and Swayze's death put the spotlight on a type of cancer that's one of the most insidious, in part as it's also one of the most silent. "There is no prevention, no early detection and unless detected in its early stages, no cure," said PCC director Laurie Ellies. "I know the devastating nature of this disease all too well as I lost my mother in 1996, just four short weeks after her diagnosis."

Pancreatic cancer is often treatable if caught early, added Ellies, "but unfortunately the vast majority of cases are not diagnosed until it's too late and the cancer has spread to



surrounding organs."

By the time symptoms appear, such as jaundice, back or abdominal pain, weight loss and digestive problems, the disease has usually spread to surrounding organs and advanced to the point where little can be done.

Patrick Swayze died recently from a long battle with Pancreatic cancer.

Almost everyone associated with PCC has been affected by pancreatic cancer — both Chairs of PCC, Betty Aldridge and Laurie Ellies lost loved ones to this "silent killer," along with PCC director Nella Contardi, who lost her sister, Lucia, to the disease as well.

Swayze's courageous and very public battle with his illness put the disease in the spotlight and had members of PCC seizing on his high profile to bring together not only one of the most successful fundraising initiatives for the association but to pay homage to the late actor as well.

The glittery, sold-out event, which was held at the Terrace Banquet Convention Centre in Concord featured fabulous food, fantastic prizes and fashion from the city above Toronto. Award-winning entertainers recreated the dance moves that made *Dirty Dancing* a household name.

## Early detection

Of particular note was a special, limited-edition handbag and folio designed by the Carina Black (Carinablack.com) exclusively for PCC, to commemorate this fifth year anniversary of raising awareness and supporting early detection in Canada. All revenues from the bag and folio will be donated to PCC, which in turn, benefits research at Princess Margaret Hospital.

"It was heartbreaking what

happened to Patrick Swayze, — and others who died of the same disease including people like Michael Landon, Luciano Pavarotti, Joan Crawford and Jack Benny, to name just a few — but Swayze's was a very public battle that really brought pancreatic cancer out to the forefront," said Contardi. "When we came up with the *Dirty Dancing* theme and brought it to the CIBPA for consideration, it was like wow! This is the perfect fit. We wanted to make this a positive, energetic affair to help raise funds and raise awareness while paying tribute to a man who really left a powerful legacy."

"It is our hope that ... we can help make early detection of pancreatic cancer a reality. Together ... we can make a difference," added Ellies.