

Founding law partner Valo battles ALS

Tournament will help raise needed funds for research

By Mike Beggs

Sid Valo had a surprise for everybody when he not only showed up at Pallett Valo's 11th annual Beat The February Blues party on February 7, but stayed for much of the night.

The former founding partner of this prominent Mississauga law firm is in the advanced stages of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), better known as "Lou Gehrig's Disease", which over the past year has forced him into a wheelchair, and made his voice faint and his words slow and beleaguered.

"We were delighted [to see Sid out]. It must have been a colossal effort on his part," says Pallett Valo managing partner Anna Esposito. "He came in from Toronto with his son and attendee. We thought he'd stay a short time, he stayed for quite a long time. It was very nice."

A relentless campaigner for ALS research (www.sidvalofund.com), Valo has had some sweet surprises of his own, of late.

First it was announced that this year's annual ALS Society of Canada Charity Golf Classic will be played in his honour, on Tuesday, June 24 at Sleepy Hollow Golf & Country Club, in Stouffville. Then, he learned that Pallett Valo has stepped forward as lead sponsor of this year's tourney.

When diagnosed with ALS in April 2005, Valo, "resolved to accept this as my new normal, and do all I can to help those afflicted with ALS". This rapidly progressive neuromuscular disease currently afflicts 2,500 to 3,000 Canadians, 80 per cent of whom will die within two to five years of diagnosis. While muscles are paralyzed and nerve cells degenerate, generally the intellect and senses remain unimpaired.

In May 2006, Valo became a director of the ALS Society of Canada, and last year he received their Exceptional Fundraising Program Award, after his WALK For ALS raised more than \$26,000. He heavily supports the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre's ALS/Neurological Clinic, a premier site for clinical research into ALS. (He's providing a matching donation to the first \$100,000 donated to, "this critical cause").

"It's so befitting (that the tournament should be held in his honour)," Esposito adds. "This charity event is probably the biggest fundraiser of the year for ALS Canada. And it's just so fitting Pallett Valo should be the lead sponsor."

With the late John Pallett, Valo was founding and managing partner of Pallett Valo from 1976 to 1992, when he left to become one of the original incorporating directors of the Greater Toronto Airport Authority. In January 1995, he was elected chairman of the board of directors and served as interim president and CEO of the GTAA, leading the negotiations with the

Government of Canada that resulted in the transfer of Pearson International Airport to the GTAA on Dec. 2, 1996. He resigned from the GTAA in 2001.

The Toronto father of three served as a director of Junior Achievement of Peel and the Living Arts Centre, is a former president of the Mississauga Board of Trade, and was named Mississauga Business Person of the Year in 1994. "Sid was a bright and vibrant individual – in spirit, and in action," recalls Esposito, who joined the firm in 1987. "That's why this disease afflicting him is so tragic. He had an excellent legal mind and an excellent business mind. But he has used all these attributes in favour of ALS." A former lawyer with Pallett Valo, Drew

Pallett (John's son), describes him as, "Extremely conscientious and of high integrity. A very, very bright guy and really intelligent, and quite creative."

"It was nice [to see him at the party]," he says. "I was impressed. Sid's a very courageous guy. He's continuing to move forward with the ALS Society of Canada, and sitting on the board. His faculties are unaffected, and his spirit is still strong."

Registration fees for the ALS Society of Canada Charity Golf Classic are \$200 per individual, \$700 per foursome, or \$100 for the 19th hole reception and dinner only. To register, e-mail Enzo Raponi, the ALS Society's senior manager of projects and events at er@als.ca.



Anna Esposito, managing partner of Pallett Valo LLP with Sidney Valo, founding partner at the 11th annual 'Beat The February Blues' gathering at their offices at 90 Burnhamthorpe Rd. W. Suite 1600. The firm is sponsoring the ALS Society of Canada's Golf Classic Tuesday June 24 at Sleepy Hollow Golf and Country Club in Stouffville. Valo was diagnosed with ALS in 2005 and became a director of the ALS Society in May 2006.

Photo by Peter McCusker

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