

Centre is contact point for Cottage Dreams program

BRIAN CLEEVE
Chatham This Week

Of all the treatments Myles McLellan received for his brain cancer, the most pleasant was at a cottage in Muskoka.

Myles, his mother Susan and father Wayne, were the first people to get a free week at a cottage in 2003, thanks to the Cottage Dreams programs.

And last week, Susan McLellan

helped screen six applicants seeking to spend time at a cottage.

Cottage Dreams is a program in which owners anonymously allow families of cancer survivors to use their cottages to get away for six days.

The McLellans were the first family to take the week-long cottage vacation. There were three cottages available in 2003 and now there are 60, which have been used by up to 600 families

across Ontario.

"Myles had just finished the bulk of his treatment and we were ready to just get away," recalls Susan.

"The cottage was an opportunity for people like us who needed a break, but couldn't afford to get away. It was great. Myles drew pictures of his visit there."

The respite helped the McLellans deal with the brain cancer that ultimately took their son's life in early 2006.

Susan says the cottage probably cost about \$400,000 and was fully furnished.

All cottages are rent-free for the cancer family to use for six days. The family has to bring its own food, linen, etc. to the cottage.

Pat Lescinsky, a volunteer with Cottage Dreams organization, says there are cottages available in Muskoka, Haliburton, Toronto areas and at Rondeau Provincial Park.

Lescinsky, who was in Chatham

on April 24 to screen applicants, said the concept began in 2003 with a woman named Seana O'Neill who received the use of a cottage with her mother.

Cottage owners can get a tax receipt for allowing them to be used, but Lescinsky said no one has ever taken advantage of it.

"The owners are happy to know that they are helping people who cancer."

The cottage owners don't get to

meet with the family and so there is an "element of unbelievable trust in perfect strangers."

Myles Miracle Mission-CANCER Assist Wellness Centre is the contact point for Cottage Dreams for Chatham-Kent and surrounding area.

For more information contact www.cottagedreams.org or www.mylesmiraclemission.ca or call Susan McLellan at 519-354-1849 or 519-365-2577.