

# AMANDA'S CRUISE

## for Juvenile Arthritis

*Story and Photography by: Tim Banic*

### HELPING MY HERO BY CRUISING THE OPEN ROAD

If you are from southern Ontario, you may have already heard of Amanda's Cruise for Juvenile Arthritis. It is an event that I and a number of my friends organize to benefit Juvenile Arthritis. Our idea was to have a day using our enthusiast vehicles for the real purpose we own them, driving. Yet at the same time we wanted to raise funds that would be donated to further research on this disease. Here is why I, along with my family and friends who make up our committee, are involved.

affect joints and includes fevers and rashes. Only 1 in 1,000 children in Canada have arthritis.

After our first visit to Sick Kids Hospital we realized our Amanda was very fortunate compared to the other children we met. She was lucky, she didn't have cancer, muscular dystrophy nor any other potentially life-threatening disease.

Amanda has gone through years of joint injections in both ankles, knees, elbows, and her jaw to reduce the inflammation. One of

(fortunately no trip to Sick Kids for this), and weekly injections of the cancer drug methotrexate.

Many people say that ball players, hockey players, singers and actors are their heroes, but my hero lives in my house with me. She doesn't score goals except when we play street hockey, she doesn't hit homeruns, and she doesn't star in movies except our home movies, but she has the ability to give "Amandarific" hugs that squeeze the stuffing out of you. When she had to go into quaran-

## Amanda's Cruise raises funds for Juvenile Arthritis. Just a bunch of guys & gals going for a drive, and doing something for a good cause.

In 1997 at the tender age of 18 months old, my daughter Amanda was diagnosed with Juvenile Arthritis. Hearing the doctor announce "She has Arthritis" was devastating. What would her quality of life be; could she do the things we take for granted; and what would we need to do as a family to make her life livable? She had no visible signs of something wrong, just a bump on her knee.

After further discussion with Amanda's Rheumatologist we learned that she had Pauciarticular Onset Juvenile Arthritis which affects fewer than 5 major joints (hips, knees, ankles, shoulders, elbows, wrists and jaw). The more severe forms of juvenile arthritis include Polyarticular Onset Juvenile Arthritis which affect large and small joints, and Systemic-Onset Juvenile Arthritis, which can

the side affects of her arthritis is "eye arthritis" or uveitis. At her worst, she was getting 25 drops a day in her eye to control the pressure and inflammation. Hourly her watch chimed for her the next required drop. She would tilt her head back, pinch the bridge of her nose so the drop would stay in her eye and still keep playing. The pressure continued to stay high, by the year 2000 Amanda was scheduled for two eye surgeries (glaucoma and cataract) in three months. She now has a contact lens and wears glasses. By 12 years old, Amanda has the strength of any adult I know. She has grown up very quickly, and now has monthly 6-hour Remicade treatments at the local hospital

tine at the hospital because of chicken pox and her medication she smiled and said, "You gotta do what you gotta do." When she hears about a child on the 'Children with Arthritis' bulletin board having to go in for an injection, she tells them she will pray for them, and writes a note of support. She doesn't let this disease hold her back. Amanda is my hero.



# AMANDA'S CRUISE 2007

In 2004, I started to talk to a few people about doing something to give back to the arthritis society because they have been so nice to us, helping us by sending our physio-therapist Sue, who has been so informative and supportive that she has become an extended part of our family.

The question was simple "Is there anything in Canada that is like the Power Tour in the US?" The answer was a big no, only car shows in parking lots. So we started to brainstorm ideas about what we could do. We started talking about a cruise from Windsor to Ottawa, but figured for our first year that would be a little bold, and decided to scale back to a local cruise/poker run. We also wanted to be different and said there would be no judging of cars, no trophies for the best paint, farthest travelled, or the most bling, just a bunch of guys & gals going for a drive, and doing something for a good cause.

In 2005, seventeen cars met in St. Mary's Ontario for a five hour cruise/poker run to Goderich, a lunch stop, and a return trip to St. Mary's. In 2006 we met in Cambridge, but mother nature didn't co-operate with us, even though it rained we had 30 cars come out for the cruise and car show, and 20 cars participate in the 3 hour cruise/poker run.

In 2007 our goals, like every year, were to have fun, go for a nice drive, raise money for charity, and inform people that arthritis isn't an old persons disease....and that we did.

Again there were no trophies for best car, nicest paint, or longest distance traveled...just a bunch of car guys & gals having fun for a good cause and either hanging out listening to music or enjoying a drive in the country. This time out, sixty cars joined us for the 3rd Amanda's Cruise & Car Show for Juvenile Arthritis that was held at the Bloomingdale Community Centre on a beautiful sunny Saturday Sept 29th. Once we finished the registration and everyone got a good look at the cars in attendance it was cruise time. Forty four cars lined up for the hour & a half poker run and cruise through the beautiful southern Ontario countryside.

With forty four cars in the cruise we managed to fill the parking lots at the poker stops pretty quickly, but it was a lot of fun, people stopped to see a slew of hotrods making their way through the country side. I'm sure it brought back memories for more than a few people.

20 February/March 2008 • P|M

The Amanda's Cruise Pit Crew did a great job of setting up the community centre for all of the participants to enjoy. The raffle table & participant prize table was filled with great prizes from all of our sponsors including our 1st gear sponsors Garage Power (Cambridge), Hitman Hot Rods (Cambridge), JC's Restoration and Supply (Kingsville), Full Throttle Welding (Cambridge), Chubby's Speed Shop (Cambridge), MOPAR & Lucas Oil Products. All of our sponsors and donators are listed on our website [ca.geocities.com/acja@rogers.com](http://ca.geocities.com/acja@rogers.com).

A great time was had at the community centre with all the cars to see, music to listen to, party beads, a raffle, 50/50 draw, and a barbeque, there was no reason not to have fun. Lucas Oil Products brought out their race car so everyone could get up close and personal and have a seat inside if they wanted. Lucas also supplied gifts for all of the registered participants, and extra draw prizes for them as well.

The best hand for the poker run was four kings (the 2nd best hand was four three's), and the winner took home \$110.00. The 50/50 draw was a respectable \$220.00.

After the last prize was given away and the last burger eaten, at the end of the day we raised \$2,600.00 for Juvenile Arthritis research and local programs. Thank you to all the participants, sponsors and volunteers...without you we would never be able to have this much fun.

We hope you will plan to attend Amanda's Cruise #4 in 2008 on Sept. 27th, the last Saturday of September at the Bloomingdale Community Centre. Email us for information at [acja@rogers.com](mailto:acja@rogers.com).

More information about Juvenile Arthritis can be found at: [www.arthritis.ca](http://www.arthritis.ca)

Additional Pictures of the 2007 Amanda's Cruise can be seen at: [ca.geocities.com/acja@rogers.com](http://ca.geocities.com/acja@rogers.com)



