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# Skydiving Raises $8,500 for Cancer Research

**Surrey, BC –** Stepping off the edge of an airplane and hurtling toward the ground at up to 200 kilometres per hour takes courage. A strong incentive is also helpful. Following weeks of planning and fundraising, 23 brave participants prepared to take the leap to help children struggling with cancer. On August 22, the first annual *Jump for the Cure* raised $8,500 for the Michael Cuccione Foundation, a cancer research organization. The event was the brainchild of AJ Stelacio, a REALTOR® at Sutton – Premier Realty and a friend who shares his passion for skydiving. Since his eighteenth birthday, AJ has taken these pulse-quickening dives an astounding 780 times!

"People often say to me that they want to skydive but they rarely commit to it. One day about three months ago, I was having a drink with Heather Armitage, the President of Active First Aid. We wanted to help sick children and a skydiving event was a natural choice. We were able to negotiate a discounted rate of $245 including HST with Pacific Skydivers in Pitt Meadows for tandem jumps (new skydivers are securely attached to a coach). When a person signed up, they committed to collecting a minimum of $200. The top fundraiser won their choice of a 5-day cruise in Mexico or the Bahamas."

Although low cloud at 4,000 feet made the tandem jumps impossible on August 22, AJ and friends demonstrated advanced level "hop and pop" jumps for the crowd. (Most of the participants have rescheduled for September 12.) In addition to attracting 23 skydivers, another 60 people came to cheer them on from an airport hanger and enjoy a barbeque dinner followed by live music. Uno Mas, a "funky jazz soul band" kept the party going long after the last experienced parachutist touched down.

"It was very rewarding. A lot of people started helping us out months ago and put in about 10 hours of work on the day of the event. We are also grateful to sponsors including Toyota Scion. Next year, the event will be huge—we're aiming for $40,000."

In the meantime, AJ will be practicing a sport he loves, in particular 'swooping'. This involves diving the parachute canopy at the ground, then swooping up and gliding horizontally for as long as possible. "Recently, I tried it over a pond, which is safer and makes it easier to try some tricks. The goal is to get a foot in the water and do some tricks with your parachute while you are flying along at about 50 to 60 miles per hour."

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