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Shaking Down Cancer

03.06.2007 | Culture and Society, Students, Service and Giving Doyle, a senior mechanical engineering student at the University of Dayton, will try to break the Guinness Book of World Records in hand shaking on Saturday, March 17, in downtown Chicago. His goal is 32,000 handshakes in eight hours, and his hope is to raise \$10,000 for cancer research.

"My paternal grandmother died in 2005 from breast cancer, and lung cancer took my maternal grandmother this past January," Doyle said. "Both losses really devastated me. Cancer took away both of my grandmothers. Of course, I wanted to go after it."

Doyle had just finished an internship in Boston and stopped to visit his maternal grandmother in Cleveland on his way back to Dayton. It was shortly before her death. He had the long drive back to Ohio to think about his grandmothers, cancer and the feeling of helplessness. It was during that drive that he decided he had to do something.

"I thought if I really wanted to make as big of a difference as I can, I need to do something different," Doyle said. "I thought about my last day of work in Boston when there were all these handshakes to say goodbye to me. That's when it came to me."

Doyle's effort, Shaking Down Cancer 2007, will take place during the St. Patrick's Day parade in Chicago where thousands of spectators line the streets downtown. Doyle is hoping to break the record set by Yogesh Sharma who shook hands with 31,118 different people in eight hours during a trade fair at Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India, in January 1996.

In order to shake 32,000 hands in eight hours, Doyle will need to shake 4,000 an hour, or roughly 66 or 67 a minute. He'll have two independent counters keeping track.

Doyle also will have the support of about 20 friends with him in Chicago who will go ahead of him to round up potential handshakers. Greg Saluke, a student at The Ohio State University and one of Doyle's "handlers" at the event, also has been touched by cancer. One of his grandmothers died of pancreatic cancer, and his grandfather is now fighting skin cancer.

"There are many great ways to make cancer an afterthought, but a lot of money is required for change," Saluke said. "We're just trying to do our part to motivate people to raise funds for research and bring about a general awareness of what anyone can do to help stop cancer."

Doyle also has the support of the UD Marketing Club. Around 20 to 30 members of the club have offered to help Doyle promote his efforts by making T-shirts and fliers and contacting businesses for corporate sponsorships.

"Over the next couple weeks, will set up several donation containers across campus, in Kennedy Union, dining halls and Flyer Enterprises' locations," said Joe Restivo, marketing club president. "In order to cure cancer, everyone has to work together. We're happy to help Mike and this extraordinary project."

In addition to preparing for his midterms and working part-time for GE Aircraft Engines in Evendale, Ohio, Doyle has been in training. He's started swimming and working out in order to build his upper-body strength and firm up his shaking arm.

"It may sound strange, but beyond how quick I need to be, I'm basically going to be holding my arm in an extended position for eight hours, so it needs to be strong," Doyle said.

Already, Doyle is having luck with donations. He's raised close to \$1,000. "I'm trying to get a tenth of a cent to a whole penny per handshake," said Doyle. "I'd like to get one dollar, but people are worried about how many hands I'll shake!"

For more information or to make a donation, go to www.shakingdowncancer2007.com.

Contact Mike Doyle at 937-369-4357 or Linda Robertson at 937-229-3257.