

Walking for organ donors

BROTHERS ON THE ROAD TO LONDON IN TRIBUTE TO DONOR FAMILIES

By **BOB BOUGHNER**
The Daily News

TILBURY--- Tom Awad is walking from Windsor to London to pay tribute to organ donor families across Canada.

The 65 year-old retired factory worker, who received a liver transplant in 2002, walked along rural stretch of West Kent Monday.

Awad, accompanied by his brother, Roger, launched the organ donor awareness program Sunday in Windsor.

The pair hope to make it to London by Friday.

"I've got to make it," said Tom. "The doctor who performed my transplant at University Hospital is waiting for me to walk up to the front door."

Awad said he considers himself lucky to be alive.

"I only had a couple of weeks to live before a matching donor came forward," he said. "I'm one of the lucky ones."

Awad said more than 4000 Canadians and 200 Ontarians are on waiting lists for organ transplants.

"More than 200 Canadians die annually waiting for their miracle gift of life," he said.

The Awad brothers made it part-way from Windsor to Tilbury Sunday.

They arrived in Tilbury shortly before noon Monday and planned to walk to Chatham by late evening.

"We're making pretty good time," said Tom. "It's a miracle I'm alive let alone walking more than 200 kilometers to London."

Awad said he is continually reminding Canadians to sign their organ donor cards and discuss their decision with loved ones.

"Nearly 900 Canadian lives were saved last year as a result of living and deceased organ donations," he said. "That's 100 more than were saved in 2005."

The Awads are also fundraising for the 2008 Canadian Transplant Games scheduled to take place next year in Windsor.

Between 400 and 500 transplant athletes and their families will participate in the Olympic style games to celebrate the "Gift of Life" they received and to honour their donors and families.

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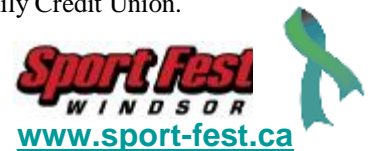
Tom Awad

The Awad, garbed in bright yellow t-shirts, are following the old Highway 2 route from Windsor to London.

The pair plan to head out today toward Louisville, Thomasville, Melbourne, Lambeth and then to London.

"We had some great walking weather Monday," said Tom. "A strong west wind helped pushed us along toward Chatham and the sun was shining."

Donations for the Canadian Transplant games can be made to the Woodslee Credit Union or the Windsor Family Credit Union.



Each year thousands of Ontarians get a second chance to live life to its fullest, thanks to the kindness of people who have given the gift of life and donated organs and tissue. But many more are still waiting. All too often lives are lost because suitable donors are not found in time. Many people will spend months, and in some cases years, waiting for a second chance because the need for organs and tissue in Ontario continues to outweigh their availability. It doesn't have to be this way. Sign a donor card and talk to your family about your decision to give life. One conversation can make all the difference for the future.



Roger and Tom Awad are walking from Windsor to London to draw attention to the need for organ donations. Tom, right is alive because of a liver transplant. The brothers arrived in Chatham and plan to head off toward London today.