



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT: Anita Morrow has been practicing relentlessly for this weekend's Lake Ontario swim.

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■ By Howard Mozel
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

A year and a half in the making, the Swim of Hope – a 33-km crossing of Lake Ontario to raise \$100,000 for The Gatehouse Child Abuse Advocacy Centre – takes place this weekend.

It begins at 6 p.m. Saturday when Oakville's Anita Morrow enters the water at Nelles Beach Park in Grimsby and ends Sunday afternoon when she finally comes ashore at Coronation Park. In doing the breaststroke the entire way, she expects to average 24 to 26 strokes per minute. Despite the ordeal that lies ahead, Morrow said she's ready.

"I'm confident, very much so," she said. "I'm feeling strong."

Training religiously while working full-time, Morrow will only take today (Friday) off for final preparations.

"I will unwind and meditate and get ready mentally," she said, adding that Monday has been reserved for sleeping.

The swim is being supervised by Solo Swims of Ontario, which has confirmed that Morrow is attempting to be the first person to swim across Lake Ontario using the breaststroke.

She will be closely accompanied by a crew of 20 people, including a sailboat with a GPS system, a pair of Zodiacs and a powerboat. It's essential, says husband Scott, that the crew remain ready and alert at all times, especially at night and in the odyssey's latter stages when a marathon swimmer's mind can become unfocused and even prone to wanting to stop.

While Morrow could arrive at Coronation Park any time between noon and 4 p.m. Sunday, supporters can track her progress on the Swim of Hope web site, www.swimofhope.ca. (This also features information on Morrow, the swim, The Gatehouse and more.)

Everyone is welcome to come out and enjoy the festivities in the park, however, which include a live band – the up-and-coming and appropriately named Great Lake Swimmers. Their second CD, *Bodies and Minds*, is now available and the band is planning a full North American tour in September.

The Swim of Hope itself can trace its origin to March 2004 when Morrow, her husband and their dog Matisse were walking along the lake and the concept of a swim flowered in her mind. After

that, there was no turning back.

Morrow – herself the victim of abuse in her native Romania – trained steadily in the gym and in the pool and as the weather improved, she was in the lake at 5:30 a.m. every morning for a two to three-kilometre swim. She has also sought the expertise of Swim Master Bryan Finlay and has developed a scientific diet that will maximize her energy while minimizing the toll on her body.

For last couple of weeks Morrow has been doing mostly maintenance training but not swimming for more than an hour at a time to avoid muscle strain or accidents. "Staying in touch with the lake," however, has remained an integral part of her regimen.

The lone random element

is the weather, not that Morrow is worried.

"I trust that Mother Nature will side with us on this one," she said, adding that "when your heart and will are working in unison," only good can come of it.

The beneficiary of all this effort is The Gatehouse, located in Etobicoke, which is a response centre for people whose lives have been directly impacted by child abuse. It provides a number of unique services designated to deal with the investigation, trauma, survival and recovery of childhood sexual and physical abuse.

Since opening in 1998 it has served more than 4,500 people, including children, youth, adults, accompanying family members and the community of investigators in the field.