

King reps participate in Southlake fundraiser

By Angela Gismondi

The Run or Walk for Southlake will be held on Sunday, April 27 and organizers are hoping this year will be bigger and better than ever.

Cortney Cassidy, event specialist at Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation was at the King council meeting on Feb. 10 to raise awareness for the event.

A popular community event, the Run or Walk For Southlake attracts over 1,400 participants in support of Southlake Regional Health Centre. The event raises funds to help bring the best in health care close to home for family, friends and neighbours. With a 10, five and two-and-a-half kilometre route, a kids mini mile and kids zone, the event is fun for the whole family and features something for everybody.

The event will start at the Aurora Community Centre, located at 1 Community Centre Drive (just west of Yonge Street and Aurora Heights). Participant registration begins at 7:30 a.m. with opening ceremonies at 8:30 a.m.. The 10-kilometre run begins at 9 a.m. and the five and two-and-a-half kilometre walk or run begin at 9:15 a.m. The Kids Mini Mile takes off at 10 a.m.

Cassidy explained that the Run or Walk for Southlake benefits a lot of people including Sal Polito and his family.

“An avid runner and participant in the annual Run or Walk for Southlake since 2010, Sal is the last person you'd expect to be a cardiac patient at Southlake,” stated Cassidy.

But on July 18, 2012, as he was filling water bottles for the family to head out to his daughters' soccer game, Polito went into cardiac arrest and collapsed in his kitchen, Cassidy explained. His wife performed CPR under the guidance of a 9-1-1 dispatcher.

Paramedics rushed him to Southlake and the staff there saved his life as he went into a second cardiac arrest in the emergency department.

“After 10 days at Southlake, and a battery of tests, physicians implanted a defibrillator under Polito's clavicle,” Cassidy continued.

“The defibrillator is wired into his heart to monitor the rhythm and deliver a shock if he is in danger, allowing him to reclaim his life as a husband, father and avid runner. In 2013, Sal ran the five ‘K’ with his wife and their kids did the mini mile.”

King Township has already put together a team for this year's event. Councillor Avia Eek is the captain of the King Marsh Muckers, who will once again be participating in the walk.

“I was born at Southlake back when it was called York County Hospital, in 1963, so too, were my children,” stated Eek in an email.

“As our communities in York Region grew, so too, did our hospital. What started as a small community hospital has grown into a healthcare facility comparable to a downtown teaching hospital – something we should be very proud of.”

She added that Southlake is number one in Ontario for shortest waiting times in the emergency department (90,000 visits in 2013 alone) and the third largest cardiac program in the Province. The Stronach Regional Cancer Centre makes it possible for cancer treatments to take place close to home, rather than having patients travel to Toronto for necessary treatments.

“Another reason to help raise funds for our hospital is that it is only through donations and fundraising for Southlake that we are able to purchase equipment to further reduce waiting times for other medical procedures. Money provided by the Province really only covers the day-to-day operating expenses of the hospital, not the purchase of equipment,” explained Eek.

Eek is hoping the King Marsh Muckers raise enough in donations to bring the trophy back to King Township.

“We need to bring that trophy back home,” she concluded.