

Pan Am torch comes to King City

By Jake Courtepatte

It was a cold, wet Thursday afternoon, but supporters came out in droves last week to welcome the historic Pan Am flame to King City at King City Public School.

While a number of activities planned were cancelled due to the downpour, the parking lot at the school was filled with cheering kids, staff, family and friends, while inside the school students lined the windows hoping to catch a glimpse of the torch.

On Day 26 of the flame's extensive 41-day cross-country tour, the torch began in Richmond Hill, winding its way north to a major community celebration in Aurora before starting a route in King City on Burton Grove. From there it went north on Keele Street up to King Road, east to King Boulevard and down towards the school. Cheering onlookers lined the route, some waving flags.

Nobleton's Peggy Belcher was the proud torchbearer to carry the flame to the celebration, beaming as the convoy made its way into the crowd, and welcomed by a large Canadian flag held high by cranes from two of the Township's fire trucks.

Belcher, the 2014 King Township Citizen of the Year, has been volunteering within her community for a number of years.

Alessandra Benazzi, 17, was chosen in late April as the other community torchbearer for King, carrying the torch down a stretch of Keele Street along the route. She was the 2014 Youth Award of Merit recipient for King Township.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini took the time to say a few quick words over the sound of heavy rain, thanking the volunteers, torchbearers, and the supporters for sticking it out.

"It's great to still see so many of you here today," he said. "It's a proud day for our torchbearers, and for our community."

The torch relay continues through eastern Ontario, returning to Toronto on July 10 with the lighting of the cauldron at the opening ceremony downtown.

For more information on the Pan Am Games, visit www.toronto2015.org.