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Run for Southlake raises over $120,000, and counting



By Jake Courtepatte

A wet and cold Sunday morning was not enough to put a damper on Southlake Regional Health Centre's biggest fundraiser of the year.

The 2016 Run or Walk for Southlake went off with a bang at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, the gun sounding on the first of three runs throughout the morning just after 9 a.m.

Nearly 900 participants raised more than $120,000 for the hospital by race day this year, while hundreds of family and friends cheered from the sidelines. With options to run or walk 2.5K, 5K, or 10K, most took part in the 5K event, including former patient at Southlake Vickey Lee.

The Muskoka resident became much too familiar with the Newmarket care centre just last year, suffering life-threatening heart issues. The level of care she received at the facility helped her realize how important close-to-home professional medical care can be, even for someone with an active lifestyle like herself, with seven grandchildren and a job painting houses.

Helping her nephew move two years ago, however, she did not realize that she had suffered a heart attack. Upon hearing the news, she was put in the care of the Southlake cardio program, the third-largest in Ontario which treats more than 10,000 patients a year.

Two procedures and three coronary stents later, Ms. Lee walked away from Southlake with no lasting damage to her heart.

?When we say ?heart hospital' up here in Muskoka, everybody thinks of Southlake,? said Lee. ?And they're absolutely right. I felt completely comfortable and not the least bit anxious. I trusted that they knew what they were doing.?

This year, her sister Joy suggested they take part in the Run for Southlake. After the care she received, Lee was more than happy to give back to the facility that may very well have saved her life.

?I live in Muskoka, and to have access to a facility of the quality of Southlake is a tremendous thing. I am grateful that our community has access to the exceptional quality of care that Southlake has to offer and hope more patients will find the help that I received.?

The annual run is chock-full of inspiring stories just like Ms. Lee's. Newmarket-Aurora MP Kyle Peterson marked the first anniversary of his father's passing on the day of the race, having spent time under Southlake's care.

He and his wife raised almost $700 for the cause.

Steve Hinder, co-chair of the Run, was quick to thank the hundreds of people who poured their time, money, and support into the cause on race day.
?To see this many people out here today is really a testament to what Southlake means to the community,? he said. ?It's impacted a lot of people in the community personally, and they're willing to give back.?

Pledging remains open until May 15, with a total goal of $200,000 raised, a distinct possibility considering much of the funds in years past have been contributed following race day. Proceeds go to funding important measures at the hospital.

All information can be found at www.runforsouthlake.ca.