York Police run in memory of slain detective



By Jake Courtepatte

The York Regional Police are ensuring one of their own's passion for the Special Olympics lives on forever.

The memory of Rob Plunkett, a strong ambassador for the Special Olympics in life, lives on through the annual Race for Plunkett, held Wednesday at Riverwalk Commons in Newmarket.

Though the torch run by law enforcement was celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this year, it

was the ninth to be named in honour of Plunkett, who served as chair of the 2000 Special

Olympics Spring Games in York Region.

Plunkett was the victim of a botched car theft in August of 2007.

After his death, two other York Region officers stepped in to take on his role as the coordinator of the torch run, which now accepts citizens outside of law enforcement and draws hundreds of participants each year.

A gold medalist at the Canadian Police Olympics and the ?Toughest Cop Alive? contest, his love

for sports fueled his passion to get as many people as possible into the game.

?Not only was Rob a dedicated police officer, he led by example in encouraging his colleagues to participate in the

torch run,? said YRP Deputy Chief Jim MacSween. ?The legacy he has left is truly inspiring.?

The event, which begins at Newmarket's Riverwalk Commons and followed routes of both five and ten-kilometres, raised over $25,000, all of which goes to the Special Olympics program.

Over the past three years, the event alone has raised over $90,000 for Special Olympics.

?The York Regional Police has long been a supporter of the Special Olympics movement,? said MacSween. ?We served as the host police agency for a few different Games, our service has always stepped up to create incredible experiences for a number of our athletes, a number of which are on hand today.?

This year is an especially memorable one for those involved in the program: it marks fifty years since Special Olympics touched down in Ontario.

?In the last fifty years, Special Olympics Ontario has grown into the world's largest movement dedicated to promoting respect, inclusion, and human dignity for people with intellectual disabilities through sport,? said MacSween. ?We've seen what sport can do to change the lives of children and adults with intellectual disabilities?it shifts the focus from disability to ability. That's an incredible accomplishment.?

As is tradition, prior to the run members of Special Olympics Ontario carried the torch across the

grounds of the Commons to the podium before reciting the Special Olympics motto: ?Let me

win. But if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.?

Registration fees and donations to the event went directly to supporting athletes living with intellectual disabilities, helping cover the cost of transportation, programming, uniforms, and more.