

Aurora kids support Orangutans by taking to the track



Take a moment to consider the plight of Orangutans.

They are an endangered species, whose homes are being torn down and their health compromised by the palm oil industry, which supplies many of our favourite shampoos and lotions.

But, over the weekend, Aurora residents Ayaana and Vir Shah showcased their willingness to make a difference.

Ayaana, 9, and Vir, 6, ran 800 metres at the Aurora High School track for the Oasis Zoo Run Virtual Race for the Toronto Zoo, raising \$672.94.

'We're just trying to help them by running a race and raising money so the zoo can build a bigger habitat for them,' Ayaana said before the run.

The zoo run occurs annually but, due to COVID-19, many participants across the GTA and elsewhere have had to resort to a virtual race.

Both Ayaana and Vir are kids who love advocating for change. This is their first fundraiser outside of school where they both participate in school fundraisers for noble causes.

When their mother, Kinjal, was writing a story in King City a while back on a six-year old girl participating in this event, she says it was a no brainer she wanted to show her children and help spark their imaginations.

'I showed them a video about Orangutans so that they care about it and they know what they're going for. So, they watched the video and they found out why Orangutans are endangered and learned why we need to help them,' Kinjal said.

The siblings immediately signed up on September 1 with the team name, 'Save The Orangutans.'

Using social media as one of their primary platforms, the Shah family set out an initial \$200 goal.

People would ask questions to the family when the children were practicing their run around the track and would ask for the link to donate to the cause.

Donations expanded as far as Australia.

Both children love reading and when they heard Australian children's author famous for the 'How To Watch' series, Adam Wallace, donated to the cause, it was a very heartening moment.

'That really encouraged us a lot because when someone donates we always feel really happy that we're actually heading towards our goal. It really makes us happy,' Ayaana said.

Their initial goal soon became \$400, and then \$600, following weeks of continuous exposure within the community and abroad.

Ayaana and Vir set out to beat their best recorded times thus far.

The family was supported by neighbours who came out to watch and neighbouring children held the ribbon across the track when both children finished.

Longo's Aurora donated a gift card to the family in support to purchase snacks and other support came from the Save the Henderson Drive Forest Group.

Kinjal explained the family is in support of the ethical treatment of animals and the family has been raised vegetarians for generations.

For future, Ayaana and Vir said they would love to continue fundraising. They look forward to donating again next year for another animal this time around.

For further information you can head to canadarunningseries.com/oasis-zoorun.

Ayaana and Vir took part in the Cub Run. There are also five and 10 kilometre runs available. The event ends October 12.

By Robert Belardi