

## Nature's Emporium Run aims to raise \$500K for Southlake's Centennial



The countdown is on for the annual Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake, and as the local hospital marks its 100th anniversary this year, organizers have set a bold fundraising goal to support local healthcare: \$500,000.

Bold? Certainly. But no less achievable, said Jennifer Ritter, President & CEO of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation, as the Foundation and title sponsor Nature's Emporium gathered at their flagship Newmarket store on Monday afternoon to launch this year's Run.

The 12th Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake, which has its roots in the Hartwell Challenge, a run that used to take place in Aurora in memory of former councillor and runner Bob Hartwell, will take place in Newmarket on Sunday, April 28.

Always a popular fundraising event which regularly raises approximately \$400,000 for the hospital each year, this year's event has an extra resonance celebrating a century of local healthcare ? and this year's theme is \$100 for 100 Years.

?We had somewhere close to 12,000 people in our community ? individuals, families, friends, colleagues ? come out and we raised north of half a million dollars? to support advanced and replacement equipment,? said Ritter at the January 22 event. ?It's everything from the most advanced tools like PET CT, MRIs, CTs, equipment you hear us talk about and we recently brought to Southlake; to things you can't underestimate the importance of, like comfortable and safe beds and IV poles, lifts, stretchers and transfer stretchers.

?When we have an event like this, it is the community coming together to raise funds to help us [support] the incredible people and team we have at Southlake ? so innovative, so brilliant, so compassionate ? but they are working against aging infrastructure and an aging building. We haven't had a significant infusion or transformation of our hospital in some time, aside from our award-winning top three cancer centre. We're constantly working on renewal and Southlake is an absolutely incredible place to come for treatment. We're trying to make it even more so by giving our fantastic clinicians and staff the tools they need.?

These needs were underscored this week by Southlake Chief of Staff Dr. Charmaine Van Schaik, a pediatrician and lead of the hospital's Maternal Child Program.

To say the funds raised by the Run are ?meaningful? to her team and the entire hospital community is a ?gross understatement,? she said, particularly in a geographic area that is among the fastest-growing in Ontario and with an aging population.

These factors have contributed to making Southlake one of the ?most over-crowded hospitals in the Province,? she said.

“Each year, Southlake's Emergency Department sees more than 115,000 visits. To put that into perspective, that's an average of 315 visits per day, which means a new patient every four-and-a-half minutes,” said Van Schaik. “Even with our volumes, we consistently rank as one of the top three hospitals for our Best Emergency Department Assessment Times in the Province. Results like this and many other instances of our hospital delivering exceptional care to our community are made possible in part thanks to the generosity and commitment of our sponsors, our supporters here today, and the thousands of participants who will fundraise for the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake Each year. Because of those fundraising efforts, our participants and the donors who sponsor them, we purchase critical equipment, create new and innovative healing spaces, and meet the urgent needs across the hospital that the government does not fund.

“When our Run participants fundraise for Southlake, they are literally putting tools in the hands of my fellow clinicians so we can continue to provide the compassionate and excellent care that you and your loved ones expect from us. On behalf of all the medical staff and staff at Southlake, especially the patients of Southlake who benefit from the generosity of everyone in this room and beyond, thank you.”

Similar sentiments were expressed by Nature's Emporium founder Joe D'Addario, who said participants and donors have joined them to make a “significant impact” on area healthcare.

“We're deeply grateful for the ongoing commitment and enthusiasm our community shows,” he said. “As we look forward to lacing up our sneakers and to run on April 28, to begin fundraising efforts, let's remember that each dollar raised helps us provide leading edge care close to home. When you walk or run for Southlake, you are investing in a new way of delivering healthcare. You are fundraising to keep the hospital patient care facilities up to date and to give healthcare experts the tools they need to deliver the best possible care for our communities.”

For more on the 2024 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake, including how to register for the event and sponsor a participant, visit [runforsouthlake.ca](https://runforsouthlake.ca).

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