

## Run for Southlake aims to get back to pre-pandemic levels of fun



The countdown is on for the 2023 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake and, in this second in-person event since COVID-19, organizers are hoping to see a return to pre-pandemic levels of participants and fun ? and, of course, funds raised for the local hospital.

Organizers formally launched the countdown to the Sunday, April 30, event last week at the title sponsor's flagship Newmarket store and lending their enthusiasm to the cause were some of the frontline workers who know the realities of what it takes to keep a hospital like Southlake going.

?To say the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake is meaningful to our clinicians at the hospital would be an enormous understatement,? said Barb Steed, Executive Vice President of Clinical Services for the Hospital. ?The event brings with it a groundswell of community support we feel in every corner of Southlake. Not only do we get the pleasure of actually seeing the event as some of us lug up that hill?we see day-to-day difference [when] the community shows up to fundraise for our hospital. Because of the fundraising events, you ? the participants, the donors who sponsor them ? we can purchase very critical equipment, create and renovate healing spaces, and meet the urgent needs the government doesn't fund.?

Whether you plan to participate in the run itself or sponsor a runner, every step and dollar helps Southlake reach their goals; money raised by the Southlake Foundation through the event will go to the hospital to tackle myriad needs, from day-to-day equipment to their ongoing capital campaigns raising funds for mental and maternal health.

?Every April this event inspires grateful patients, families, community members and partners from across York Region and Simcoe County to come together for Southlake's largest fundraising event across all of our communities in our catchment,? said Jennifer Ritter, President & CEO of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation. ?Last year was the first in two years we came together in person and it was my first in-person run. It was incredible to see literally hundreds of participants on Davis Drive. As we gear up for 2023, what's really exciting is to think about getting back to numbers in the thousands. If last year was any indication, I think that is achievable as people start getting out and about again.

?Fundraising is integral. The province doesn't cover all costs of equipment, all capital needs, all infrastructure. It's a partnership among hospital, province or governments, and among our communities, and having all of our communities come out, celebrate Southlake and celebrate those who have taken such great care of us in the last two or three years of these crazy times. It's a great show of support and an opportunity to say thank you and to put the right tools in the right hands so that they can create healthy and thriving communities.?

Prior to COVID, the Nature's Emporium Southlake Run's highest participation level was in the neighbourhood of 1,500 individuals,

with subsequent virtual and hybrid events over the pandemic bringing out 850 and raising just under \$40,000 in the process.

“It would be fabulous to see the numbers go back up to over 1,000 [participants] and we would love to raise \$500,000,” said Ritter.

Another goal, according to Joe D’Addario of Nature’s Emporium, is to help the Southlake Run’s cumulative fundraising total surpass the \$3,000,000 mark.

“When we started this partnership, we were thinking what would be better than to partner up with Southlake because we share a common bond in health and wellness and that is the most important part in life, to have good health,” he said. “For the community and new people who are coming to the Newmarket and Aurora community it is important for them to see the type of culture we have here. We have a bond and we share that bond through health and wellness. It is the best community—for me it is the best community in the world.”

Added Ms. Ritter: “Nature’s Emporium has been an extraordinary community partner to Southlake and many other organizations in our community, demonstrating their commitment to community-based care. Last year we celebrated a decade of the Nature’s Emporium Run for Southlake and this will be our 11th year. It’s a tangible expression of your passion for all things community and keeping our communities healthy and thriving and we’re all truly grateful.”

To register to participate in the 2023 Nature’s Emporium Run for Southlake, or to support an individual or team, visit [runforsouthlake.ca](http://runforsouthlake.ca).

By Brock Weir  
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