

Southlake sets sight on expansion as 100th anniversary approaches



Southlake Regional Health Centre has been providing leading-edge care to community members since its foundation nearly a century ago.

As its 100th anniversary of incorporation approaches in 2024, the local hospital has significant expansion in its sights with the development of a second campus within northern York Region, and tasked with helping make the dream a reality are two former Aurora Citizens of the Year.

Peter Van Schaik and Steve Hinder, both Aurora residents, are co-chairs of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Philanthropy Cabinet, a group of community leaders who have turned their support for the hospital into action.

‘If you’re looking for an organization that affects everyone in our community, it’s the hospital,’ says Hinder. ‘Having been involved with many different charities over time and now focusing on my life and reining things in a little bit, perhaps, it’s the hospital; my family, my neighbours, everybody benefits. When we put our efforts forth, we’re reaching everyone in the community in that regard and it’s pretty rewarding.’

The Southlake Foundation and the Philanthropy Cabinet are still buoyed from the October’s Southlake Gala, an event which served as a launch event for the hospital’s new Where Cancer Meets Its Match campaign benefiting the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre. The event raised \$3.5 million the capital campaign in the process.

But everyone involved still knows there’s a lot more work to be done and they have no intention of resting on their laurels.

‘This is a real special community,’ says Hinder. ‘We need to grow that base exponentially because we have to respond to growth (in the community). Growth is the reason we need to build another hospital. Our challenge is getting into those new communities, getting more people to come on board with us, growing our Cabinet and being as inclusive as we can be. We need people to open doors to us so we can start those conversations about Southlake.’

Adds Van Schaik: ‘What’s more important in your community than having a good healthcare centre? We all know that the government is not funding everything. We have a choice: for those who have the capacity to give, why would you not want to send money to the hospital when you get a tax deduction when you do and you also enhance your hospital services? If you have a good hospital that is well-equipped, you can also attract the right talent. All these things go hand in hand.’

For Jennifer Klotz-Ritter, President & CEO of the Southlake Foundation, no one should have to travel away from the communities Southlake serves when they are ill and leave their support systems to travel for care.

'We as a community are coming together to say we don't want them to have to do that,' she says. 'We want their families who are also impacted when somebody is on the journey to fight their cancer. We don't want their families to be burdened and to have that additional stress. The community answered the call [with our cancer campaign] to say, 'Nobody should have to travel to get the care they need and that they deserve,' and I think that is quite remarkable.'

Soon, she adds, they will be in a Master Plan campaign for the new hospital, which will see the existing campus on Newmarket's Davis Drive continue its focus on cancer care, ambulatory care and urgent care, while the second campus will focus on acute care.

'While we have a planning grant of \$5 million to figure out the functional program, it is still early in the process, but there's always a local share to any expansion or redevelopment,' says Lesley Ring of the Southlake Foundation. 'The cabinet will be instrumental in helping to inspire the community around raising the local share of any redevelopment or new build. It's quite a significant role. As we get through the planning of the new hospital, we'll know more about how much that local share will be and what the goal for the foundation and the community we serve - what that goal will be.'

'The hospital was publicly incorporated as York County Hospital in 1924. We have two years to the next gala and the real celebration of the centennial and 100 years of leading-edge care. Being able to complete the cancer campaign and use that as a bridge to the mega campaign to support a new Southlake - that's really exciting and, at the same time, celebrating 100 years of this hospital caring for these communities and beyond - is also something to really celebrate. We have lots planned in that regard.'

'We have two wonderful leaders in Peter and Steve who are so well respected in our community, that lead by example, are invested in our community, and help us to recruit and mobilize this tremendous group of volunteer leaders that are ambassadors, that are champions, and most importantly are connectors who say, 'We stand with Southlake and are here to reach out to our networks to similarly inspire them with the hospital.'

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