

Best friends preparing to take on Southlake Run this Sunday



The 2025 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake, the signature annual fundraiser for Southlake Health, is set to take off from the Newmarket hospital on Sunday, April 27, with a mission to raise over \$500,000 for local health care.

Formally known as the Hartwell Challenge, which began on residential streets in Aurora, the Southlake Run has raised millions for the local hospital since its inception and remains as popular as ever.

Among the participants this year are Jillian Swindle, a resident of East Gwillimbury, and Orillia's Ellie Hill.

According to Dionne Malcolm of the Southlake Foundation, the two friends once thought their running days were behind them due to dealing with ?excruciating hip pain? each day, but care at Southlake turned this idea on its head.

?For years, both women explored a variety of surgical options, and each were told they would have to wait until they were eligible for total hip replacements. That was until they found Southlake Health orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Patrick Gamble,? says Malcolm. ?Dr. Gamble was offering a revolutionary hip resurfacing procedure for younger, highly-active patients. This procedure has given women like Jillian and Ellie the ability to move with less pain and increased mobility. Both Jillian and Ellie underwent the procedure in 2023, and it was in an online patient forum that their friendship blossomed; bonding over the drastic and positive impact they experienced post-procedure.

?Now, nearly two years following their surgery, Jillian and Ellie are participating in the 2025 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake to thank their hospital ? and their incredible surgeon ? that gave them their lives back.?

Ellie, a personal trainer and fitness instructor by trade ? and a mom of three ? says the care she received at Southlake was ?life-changing? and she feels a responsibility to give back to the hospital.

?At some point in time, we will all need Southlake, so we need to support it for when that time comes,? said Ellie in comments shared by Southlake. ?I needed care perhaps sooner than some and it's my honour to fundraise to pay that forward to others in our community who need the same great care.?

Added Jillian, who is an x-ray technologist at Southlake: ?Supporting the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake is not only in gratitude for my care, but also enables me to do my part in equipping my colleagues with upgraded tools and technology so we can

continue providing leading edge care to our patients.?

Ahead of the April 27 event, the Southlake Foundation said this year's Run has the largest number of registered teams in the event's 23-year history.

As of Saturday, April 18, the Foundation was standing at nearly \$270,000 of their \$500,000 goal.

The top three individual fundraisers at press time were Beth Egan, Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Athan Chartsis. A perennial top fundraising team, Team Aurora stood second place in the team rankings with \$17,365, well behind the leading Team EG (East Gwillimbury) at \$37,101. Rounding out the top three were the Fun-Raisers with \$16,810.

?Every April, the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake inspires grateful patients and families, community members, our Southlake family, and partners from across York Region, Simcoe County and beyond, to come together for Southlake,? says Jennifer Ritter, President and CEO of Southlake Health Foundation. ?This year, we hope to raise a record \$500,000 and we are so grateful to participants like Jillian and Ellie for honouring the great care they received through their support of this event. Together, we can all be a part of ensuring leading edge care for every member of our communities who needs it.?

While registration for this year's Run closed April 17, there are plenty of opportunities to support participants and teams. To lend your support and donations, visit runforsouthlake.ca.

By Brock Weir