

Business owner, cancer survivor, raises more than \$74k for Southlake through men's fashion show



Physicians from Southlake Regional Health Centre recently strutted their stuff to raise more than \$74,000 for local health care services.

Mike Rathke, owner of Aurora's MR Menswear, held his near-annual fashion show at the NewRoads Centre for the Performing Arts in Newmarket for an evening of whiskey, wine, and fashion.

Showcasing the top tier fashions that customers have come to expect from the clothier, which is located on Yonge Street at Church, were five doctors who lead the teams at the local hospital.

"They gave up their time and talent to be here tonight to help us to help them as we raise money for Southlake, our hospital, and specifically cancer care," said event emcee Steve Hinder, co-chair of Southlake's Philanthropy Cabinet. "The money raised tonight will support the HERE is Where Cancer Meets its Match campaign."

Whiskey, Wine & MR Menswear is a cause close to the heart of Rathke and his family.

Just before he turned 19, Rathke was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumour, resulting in a long series of treatments and therapies as he not only recovered from his cancer treatment but learned how to walk and communicate again.

"In 2017, I received the worst news I could imagine. I was diagnosed with the C-word," said Rathke at the event. "I had already gone through so much struggle and pain during my first treatment - it was brutal - and I couldn't imagine doing it again. I am so fortunate to live in Aurora, in this area, and I am lucky to be surrounded by loved ones, friends and community members.

"Everyone knows someone - a family member or a friend - who has been impacted by cancer and that is why we're here tonight to support Southlake and the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre. We need more positive stories and I am thankful to be one of them."

As more cancer services and treatments are added close to home, there will be many more positive stories to come throughout the community, Southlake underscored.

The importance of having care close to home is clear to Rathke - as it is for Dr. Tatiana Conrad, Radiation Oncologist at

Southlake, who gave a clear example of the impact these developments have.

“Several months ago, I saw a patient I had known for numerous years,” she recalled. “I already treated her with radiation for lung cancer and on her follow-up CT scan, the place where she had her radiation was getting bigger. There was some uncertainty whether this was growing cancer or scarring from her previous scan.”

Dr. Conrad recommended a PET CT scan to get to the bottom of it but, at the time, these services were only available in cities like Toronto.

“As a single woman without extended family [relying] on volunteers to attend her appointments at the Cancer Centre, she declined the test even though she knew that it could help detect the return of her cancer. I ordered a regular CT scan to be done at Southlake three months later. It showed the same change. By that time, Southlake's PET CT scanner was up and running. She agreed to the scan which would be performed closer to home. While I would love to be able to tell you it showed us nothing but scarring, that wasn't the case. Her cancer had returned and grown and there [were no] uncertain terms what we were dealing with. Swiftly and, more importantly, locally, she was booked for surgery with the expert thoracic team at Southlake.

“Thanks to this new equipment, patients will no longer have to travel downtown or to Mississauga for advanced diagnostics, waiting weeks for employment or enduring the burden of travel.”

The HERE is Where Cancer Meets its Match campaign is a \$20 million initiative to “empower us to continue providing the best possible cancer care in our community,” added Dr. Conrad, noting that it will also lead to greater capacity and the ability for Southlake to replace outdated and aging equipment with new technology that offers “a superior standard of care.”

“When you hear you have cancer, life is never the same. Most of us in this room tonight have likely been affected by cancer. We all know someone who has faced one of life's toughest battles. Cancer hits close to home. Care should be close to home, too,” she said. “Over a decade ago, the community came together to help build the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, ensuring leading edge cancer care is available where people need it most. The Cancer Centre has served our communities with distinction and it is consistently in the top three of Ontario's 14 cancer centres and recently became the first partner in the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre Network. We now face the challenges of a growing and aging population. We must also replace critical equipment at the end of the service life and keep pace with rapidly advancing technology.

“With the help of our supporters like yourselves we can administer thousands more treatments, provide better imaging or more precise diagnostics and reduce wait times for life-saving care.”

By Brock Weir
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