

Fashion show by Omars will shine a light on Men's Health and local hospital



The global pandemic got in the way of Omars Shoes fully celebrating its 50th anniversary in the community, but they're determined to make a splash this year as they celebrate their 55th with a special fashion show shining a light on Southlake Health.

But the theme of the evening ? Men's Health ? has special resonance for the Khamissa family, which has operated the store over three generations ? as co-owner Raz continues his battle with prostate cancer.

?Our 50th anniversary was when COVID was happening and we couldn't get to celebrate, so I wanted to do something for our 55th year ? but instead of doing the same old typical things, we wanted to do something for our community,? says store co-owner Mae Khamissa.

Doing something to benefit the local hospital was a choice early on, and planning began in earnest this past October for an event highlighting community mental health care. By the holidays, however, the family was rocked with Raz's own diagnosis and wife Mae suggested training the spotlight on Men's Health, a topic some guys find hard to discuss.

?Raz was still processing it and said, ?No, I don't think so,' so we left it,? Mae explains, adding a family trip to South Africa to celebrate a wedding was a tonic in helping him get his thoughts in order. ?He realized how many men don't actually get checked.?

?As you talk to more people, there are so many who don't get checked,? continues Raz. ?If awareness is the best thing that comes out of it, that's great. The more people know about it, the more people get checked and look after themselves ? guys have a tendency to hold things in and not talk about it and say anything ? so that is the good that is going to come from this.?

Omars Fashion Thru the Ages will take place the evening of May 20 at the Royal Venetian Mansion on Industrial Parkway South.

It will feature an array of men's fashions that can be found at Omars, which will be modelled by several ?local celebrities? walking the runway, including Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas and King Mayor Steve Pellegrini.

Live music and dancing will be provided by Soul Benefit.

?The whole idea is let's make this a fun night, all for a good cause,? says Raz. ?55 years in Aurora is a huge accomplishment. You try to keep low key and you don't try to say too much, but it is pretty amazing and the fact that we're a third-generation business, we're very proud.?

Omars was founded by the eponymous Omar Khamissa, whose son and daughter-in-law remain co-owners and operators, and in

recent years have been joined in the family business by their own daughter, Saarah.

?We realize why we've been around for 55 years is because of the support we have had from this community,? says Saarah. ?It has been incredible as a small business still going strong after such a long time. With so much competition, it's a huge testament to the people around us, that have supported us, and we have seen that in doing this event ? the incredible community has really come together to support this cause, support the event and support us for being around for so long.

?Our ticket sales so far have been great and it's just because people want to support us and the want to support a great cause. It's a huge testament to the community we're living in and we're really proud that people there are surrounding us. It works both ways ? we've tried to provide the best service we can for our community and, in turn, they have come to us to support us. If you do what you can do for the people that are around you, they will give the same back. That's why I think we have lasted this long.?

Adds Mae: ?I really feel like the community is putting a blanket around us and really feeling that comfort from our community. We have always been proud, but we're more so proud of this wonderful town and its people. We feel like one big family.?

For more on the upcoming Omars Fashion Thru the Ages event, including tickets, visit www.eventbrite.ca/e/omars-fashion-thru-the-ages-tickets-1288255399579.

By Brock Weir