

First Responders celebrations had added poignancy



(Glass Tiger performs at iRun & Rock on Saturday afternoon
Auroran photo by Brock Weir)

By Brock Weir

As people from York Region converged on Newmarket's Ray Twinney Complex Saturday for the first annual iRun & Rock in honour of area first responders and those living with PTSD, events of the previous day added poignancy to what was otherwise due to be a celebration.

A moment of silence was held at the start of the run, which culminated with a concert lead by bands made up of paramedics, police, and fire fighters, capped by an extensive set by Glass Tiger, in honour of the paramedics and pilots who lost their lives in an ORNGE helicopter crash near James Bay on Friday morning.

?As I stood on the stage participating in the opening of this event, it really brought home that every day our first responders at all levels get up and do their job, putting themselves in harm's way,? said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees, whose efforts to declare May 1 First Responders Day across Ontario was part of the inspiration behind the event.

?The response has been overwhelming. I think people appreciate the fact that they are having an opportunity just to pause and consider what it is the first responders do for them. But, more importantly, the focus today is on the effect it has on our first responders and their families. The fact is, it is not easy for them. These are very, very difficult undertakings and to be confronted with challenges on a day-in and day-out basis takes a toll on people both physically and mentally.?

The event was founded by Southlake Nurse and Yoga Instructor Nicole Taylor, a military wife whose work as an instructor focuses on First Responders. She has seen firsthand the effects that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has on these people and her purpose in founding this event was not only to honour them and raise awareness, but also raise funds for research studies for PTSD treatment.

She said that it had been overwhelming to watch everyone come together for a common cause and new volunteers had come forward wanting to know what they could do for next year's event.

iRun and Rock also offered a special message from comedian Rick Mercer and a chance to meet Enrico Colantoni and David Paetkau, stars of TV's Flashpoint.

?First responders leave everything out there,? said Mr. Colantoni. ?They are there to protect and serve, but they don't always come back the way they went in.?