

Foundation boosts Risk Assessment Tool during heart month

By Brock Weir

Community organizations are now in high gear with different ways of marking Heart Month, and there is always room for more, says Alex Reil, Senior York Region Manager for the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Mr. Reil warmly welcomed the decision of Joe Anselmo, franchise owner of the south Aurora Swiss Chalet and Harvey's restaurant, to highlight the story of young heart patient Owen Veloso in helping raise a significant amount of dollars for the Foundation's work. ?We have a number of companies on board and Swiss Chalet and Joe have set the highest target by far, so we're very excited,? says Mr. Reil. ?I came into the store and I was super excited to see how [the fundraiser] was going so far, a power wall of hearts up there both in the front and in the back. We're always thrilled to work with community partner like Joe and get the word out there and especially to focus on one family is really heartwarming and brings [the issue] to life for so many people.?

Throughout the year ? and with a special focus this month ? the Heart and Stroke Foundation carries out a number of activities to raise awareness, particularly at schools.

Over 75 per cent of York Region schools, he says, participate in the Jump Rope for Heart program, raising awareness and funds for heart health.

?We're getting the kids to have an exercise day and bringing attention to being healthy and spreading the word about personal habits like not smoking, getting outside, sleeping and managing stress,? he says. ?One of the things we're really pushing is a risk assessment tool. A lot of people don't know their personal risks, genetic factors, and how their lifestyle choices affect their chances of heart disease and stroke. We have an online tool for that and all this money rolls into that and flows back into the community that way.?