

Glass Tiger shines light on First Responders



By Brock Weir

Glass Tiger is no stranger to blowing the roofs off venues across the country.

But when the iconic Canadian band returns to home turf in York Region this June 1, they aim not only to raise the roof through their music, but also lift the veil on an affliction suffered by many people, often in silence, throughout the area ? Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. (PTSD)

The Juno-award winning group headlines the Inaugural ?i Run & Rock for Lifesavers? event, a program to raise awareness and funds for first responders in York Region and beyond living with the disorder. The brainchild of Nicole Taylor, an operating room nurse at Southlake Regional Health Centre, and yoga instructor specializing in working with First Responders throughout York Region and Simcoe County, the festivities will unfold at Newmarket's Ray Twinney Complex on June 1.

Ms. Taylor was inspired to organize the event in part by efforts from Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees to institute an official Province-wide First Responders Day, a bill which is making its way through the Ontario Legislature and has garnered traction in many municipalities from Aurora to Oshawa. Mr. Klees, Aurora Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, Oshawa Mayor John Henry, and Newmarket Councillor Jane Twinney, leant their support for the show at Friday's official kickoff.

i Run & Rock will combine a fundraising 1k, 5k, and 10k runs, outdoor activities, and an indoor rock concert featuring Glass Tiger as well as surprise guests, and a number of bands formed by first responders themselves.

After Ms. Taylor initially made contact with Glass Tiger through a fellow nurse, it was all in for the group.

?It really was a no-brainer,? said Mr. Reid. ?Glass Tiger has always supported our first responders. We have so much respect for the work they do in any of the elements, whether it is military, EMS, police or fire. I don't know anything about putting runs together, but I said to Nicole, ?I have a little bit of experience with the rock and roll part of it, so if you want to throw a party afterwards we can make that happen.

?One of the things I am really excited about is the other bands that are joining us on stage are all first responder bands. That, I think, is incredible that not only are these incredibly gifted people that do this incredible work, but then they pick up the guitar and play a song. If you take that and go the other way around, we're not going to become firemen!?

Glass Tiger's relationship with the military and first responders began around 1996 when they were invited to tour the country and overseas entertaining the armed forces. From their time in Alert, Canada's most northerly base, to Bosnia and Afghanistan, the relationship has endured.

Now, this event brings them back to their own backyard for a cause close to their hearts.

'This has always been our stomping ground,' Mr. Reid said.

Nicole refers to herself as a 'second responder' in her frontline work at Southlake. Her off-duty role as a military wife for the past 20 years also set her on the path of working with people who are affected by trauma. When her nursing colleague was eventually persuaded to part with Mr. Reid's phone number, the event took on a life of its own.

'Obviously they are hometown heroes to York Region and when I told him what we were doing for soldiers and PTSD, he said, 'I'm in with whatever you need from the rock world.' He has been by my side every step of the way,' she said.

Next to step up to the plate were York Regional Police and Mr. Klees, who connected them with the local Pace Credit Union which, in turn, stepped up to be the name sponsor for the event.

'I came face to face with the amazing work of first responders through very practical ways with my engagement in the legislature,' said Mr. Klees. 'I am absolutely excited about i Run and Rock. We're looking forward to June 1st being a gathering place here in Newmarket for people from across this province who just want to celebrate simply what it is first responders do in our communities every day.

'We take for granted too often the men and women who are on the front lines who are engaged every day in the activities,

whether it is fire fighters, whether it is paramedics, whether it is police officers, whether it is dispatchers or helicopter pilots, or doctors and nurses on the front line.'

Declaring May 1 Ontario's official First Responders Day would, he said, serve to ensure that the work done and sacrifices made by these men and women are always uppermost in people's minds.

Through the support of Pace, admission to the June 1 concert is now free. Registration for the run, however, is \$30 per person and \$50 for a family. For more information on the event, visit www.irunandrock.ca.