

Local couple steps up to help further Terry Fox's mission



Canadians have walked the walk in honouring the life and legacy of Terry Fox and his Marathon of Hope since 1981, raising millions of dollars each year for cancer research.

Fox's legacy is one that transcends both geography and generation, but when Karen Fulbrook, a long-time supporter of the Terry Fox Foundation, learned an Aurora run might not happen this year beyond a virtual format, she and her husband stepped up to the plate with little over a month to go to make the annual run an in-person reality.

Thanks to their efforts, Aurora's 2024 Terry Fox Run will take place at the Aurora Community Arboretum on Sunday, September 15, beginning at 8.30 a.m., rain or shine.

"We certainly value the legacy that Terry Fox has given all Canadians, and we learned very recently that there wasn't a run for Aurora, so we stepped up," says Fulbrook, a dedicated volunteer with the Arboretum.

Fulbrook notes that she's received a lot of support from organizers of previous Terry Fox Runs in Aurora, as well as from organizers in Newmarket, and they are confident they have everything they need in place to make this year's event a big success.

For them, it is a chance to build upon a legacy that has had a big impact locally, provincially, and nationally.

"I remember hearing about this person who was going to dip his foot in the Atlantic Ocean and make his way across Canada, and that was a novel concept of the time, and it was really interesting to watch that build-up as he travelled across Canada," she recalls of Fox, when asked on why the Marathon of Hope still captures the public's imagination after more than 40 years. "I think it's the fact he was willing to, as the (Foundation's) slogan says, do it 'no matter what.'"

There were, of course, tremendous challenges along the way and as Fox's pain mounted and his cancer returned, he set his goal to get from telephone pole to telephone pole before he ultimately had to end the run near Thunder Bay.

"When you have a huge challenge in front of you we all know we're supposed to break these challenges down to small pieces and, to me, sharing that with students has always been really important," says Fulbrook, who recently retired from teaching. "We talked about Terry Fox every year with our students and did Terry Fox runs it's always a big story for autumn in schools, but this time we wanted to make sure it was also for the community."

Registration for the September 15 event will take place on site beginning at 8.30 a.m. at Petch House, just behind the Aurora Seniors' Centre on John West Way, and support and donations can also be expressed online at terryfox.org.

The Run will set off from Petch House through the Aurora Community Arboretum beginning at 9 a.m., and participants are invited to run, walk, skate, roll or cycle and, of course, enjoy the beauty of the Arboretum along the way.

'We'll have an opening of welcome thanking all the volunteers and we'll have some music and entertainment,' says Fulbrook of the kick-off. 'If people want to do a full 10km they have to do the route twice, but if someone would rather a shorter walk, there's a 2km option where people can just walk where they want and that's okay. It's not supposed to be onerous; it's supposed to be a community event in support of the Terry Fox Foundation. [The Arboretum] is a stunningly beautiful place. In September, the goldenrod is blooming, the trees are beginning to colour, it's low insect time and it's a good wellness experience.'

'Terry's personal experience and research led him to a simple conclusion - more money was needed for cancer research. And so, in the modest but motivated style that would prove to be his trademark, Terry started training and planning for his cross-Canada run to raise funds for cancer research,' says the Terry Fox Foundation. 'He dipped his artificial leg in the Atlantic Ocean on April 12, 1980 and proceeded to unite Canadians in a way never before, nor since, seen. The only thing that could have stopped Terry from reaching the Pacific Ocean did. Cancer returned in his lungs and he was forced to stop on September 1, 1980 after having run 5,373 kilometres.'

'Before his death on June 28, 1981, Terry had achieved his once unimaginable goal of \$1 from every Canadian. More importantly, he had set in motion the framework for an event, The Terry Fox Run, that would ignite cancer research in Canada, raising more than \$850 million since 1980, and bring hope and health to millions of Canadians.'

By Brock Weir