

Magna donation will help reduce wait times at Southlake



By Brock Weir

Aurora's Magna International gave Southlake Regional Health Centre's Images for Life campaign a much needed boost Friday, with a \$1 million donation towards the purchase of a new MRI unit.

Friday's donation was the latest in a long line of partnerships between Magna and the local hospital, a partnership which has contributed over \$10 million towards many projects at Southlake, \$8 million of which went towards the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre.

On hand Friday was CEO Don Walker. His \$1 million cheque brought Southlake's Images for Life campaign to the halfway point of their overall campaign goal of \$16 million to fund the purchase and installation of a new state-of-the-art MRI unit aimed at reducing wait times for non-urgent patients.

?Imagine having to wait one, two, or three months to find out what a lump or a bump was all about and whether it was really serious,? said Neila Poscente, President of the Southlake Foundation, who accepted the cheque from Mr. Walker. ?Or imagine being one of 3,500 patients who have to go outside of their catchment area and outside Southlake to do that diagnostic test that is so essential for them. A woman named Jill, is an eight-year cancer survivor, which is a wonderful achievement, but her mother, grandmother, and cousin all had cancer, putting Jill at a very high risk for redeveloping the cancer she has already successfully fought off.

?Every year she has to go for tests and she has to go to Toronto, she has to plan her trip, worry about weather, worry about whether she has cancer or not, and has to go outside of her community to get that diagnostic test that she needs so badly. We are going to be helping people like Jill when we have that second MRI here at Southlake. It really is a very essential piece of equipment and we're very excited about it.?

According to radiologist Dr. Yin Hui Siow, Director of Nuclear Medicine at the hospital, the new MRI machine will contribute approximately 8,000 scans annually, significantly cutting wait times by about 80 per cent for non-urgent cases. The new machine will also provide better images that are much clearer and more detailed than what they currently have.

?We can make diagnoses much more accurate and much more confident than before,? he said. ?The core of the magnet is also much larger than our predecessors and this will help decrease the sense of claustrophobia that our patients' experience, and this will result in a better patient experience and translate into a better study because patients don't move as much.?

Ongoing partnerships with Southlake are natural fits for Magna, according to Mr. Walker, aiming to support communities in which their employees work and it is a ?pleasure? to be in a profit position where they are able to lend support to such programs.

?One of the things we believe in it is better to find things before a problem occurs,? said Mr. Walker. ?It happens in manufacturing all the time, so we do a lot of work up front and that is exactly what we're doing here as well. It is a lot less expensive and a lot better for the people at the hospital. It's a real pleasure to have a world class facility like we have at Southlake in the Region. We're very pleased to be able to be supporting the program here.?

From the perspective of Dr. Dave Williams, President and CEO of the Hospital, Magna's leadership has ?transformed? the hospital and this contribution to their Images campaign will go transforming people's lives.

?We cannot treat disease if we cannot find disease,? he said. ?The diagnostic imaging campaign is all about finding it earlier, treating it earlier, and potentially curing it earlier and that is a term in cancer we never used to use. Now we can actually talk about the concept of being able to cure certain types of diseases so I think that is truly remarkable.?