

Nature's Emporium Run sets \$500,000 goal for Southlake Fundraiser



Southlake Health's biggest annual fundraiser, the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake, is set for Sunday, April 27, and organizers are hoping to set new records for the local hospital.

On Tuesday, Southlake began the countdown to the 2025 Run at Nature's Emporium's flagship store in Newmarket.

Last year's Run, which was held in conjunction with Southlake's centennial year, saw a record turnout and organizers are hoping to keep that momentum going this year.

"We had the most people, it was a lot of fun, but one thing that was amazing is we hit the \$450,000 milestone last year," said Southlake Health Foundation CEO Jennifer Ritter at the January 15 launch event. "Today's launch is exciting because we're setting another milestone goal and looking to raise over \$500,000 this year in a steady march to the \$1 million goal."

This will be the thirteenth year Nature's Emporium has lent its name sponsor to the event, which grew out of Aurora as the Hartwell Challenge, named after late councillor and runner Bob Hartwell.

"This holds a special place in our hearts," said Nature's Emporium owner Joe D'Addario, underscoring the value Southlake brings to the community. "Over the years, this event has grown into more than just the Run; it has become a celebration of community, health and hope. It's a testament to what we can achieve when we come together for a cause that matters for all of us, ensuring that Southlake continues to provide world-class healthcare close to home."

"At Nature's Emporium, our mission has always been to inspire and empower individuals [and] this event aligns perfectly with that mission. It's a way to support the health and wellbeing of our community, not just through the nutritious organic food and wellness products we offer, but contributing to the resources that make a real difference in people's lives."

These vital needs at Southlake "and the real difference participants and community members as a whole can make" were driven home by Karyn Popovich Executive Vice-President, Quality, Practice and Patient Experience and Chief Nursing Executive, an avid runner herself.

"[The Run] speaks to many things I am really passionate about: getting outside, staying active, and being part of a movement that supports the communities that Southlake serves and the 6,000 medical staff, volunteers and learners who care for them every day," she said. "It is truly inspiring. Generous community support is part of the reason Southlake Health has built a century-long legacy of compassionate leading-edge care that transforms lives. Each and every participant who fundraises for Southlake through this event has helped to fund important upgrades and things like critical equipment and advanced technology so that our teams can contribute

to providing leading-edge care close to home to some of the fastest-growing and aging communities in Ontario.?

Citing recent equipment upgrades like York Region's PET-CT station, surgical scopes, and neo-natal care centres, she said these additions were "game changers for Southlake Health's ability to diagnose and treat cancer right here in our communities."

"These investments are possible because of the generous commitment of our sponsors and supporters here today and thousands of participants who fundraise through Nature Emporium's Run for Southlake each year. When participants fundraise for Southlake, they are literally putting the tools in the hands of our staff and our medical staff so we can continue to save lives and push boundaries and bring leading-edge care closer to home for generations to come."

To continue helping Southlake push boundaries, and maybe even push some of your own in the process, the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake will take place on Davis Drive, Newmarket, on Sunday, April 27.

For more information, including how to sign up, visit southlake.ca/foundation/ and select the Run from the Events menu.

By Brock Weir