

Northern Karate students kick for charity

By Jake Courtepatte

The Aurora division of Northern Karate Schools (NKS) upheld a longstanding philanthropic tradition by raising more than \$3,000 in June for a worthy cause.

About 200 students took part in the program's annual Friendship Tournament and Kick-a-thon, showing off their sparring and weapon skills in the tourney before kicking their way to big bucks for Simcoe-York's Children's Treatment Network.

Students were given a pledge sheet for the event, and were sponsored per kick in a two-minute time period. They competed to see who could kick the most, with the winning score being 214 front kicks and 222 roundhouse kicks to raise much-needed funds for children with special needs.

When we decided to start the Friendship Tournament 5 years ago, a lot of students and instructors were suggesting different organizations, but one of our Sandan (3rd degree Black Belt) Sian Morgan suggested Children's Treatment Network (CTN) of Simcoe York, said Charity De La Cruz, student care representative at Northern Karate. CTN provides more than 6000 children who have multiple special needs in York Region and Simcoe County with access to the rehabilitation, specialized clinical and support services they need.

The money raised goes directly to the organization's Family Fund, where one-hundred percent of the donations goes to families in need.

Northern Karate schools, a network of twelve facilities based out of Richmond Hill, has been servicing the community for over forty years. The Friendship Tournament has been an ongoing tradition for the past thirty, while this year marked Aurora's fourth year participating.

The \$3,000+ raised this year brings Aurora's total to over \$11,000 in its four years, while Northern Karate schools as a whole has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in its history for charity.

As a matter of fact, just one week prior to the tournament, Northern Karate was the recipient of the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Budo Humanitarian Award at the Canadian Hall of Fame dinner.

In support of this philosophy and a belief that Budo and benevolence are intertwined, NKS have put their power and passion behind a variety of causes, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for national and international charities, said De La Cruz.

Budo is a philosophical term amongst martial arts circles meaning the way.

Charities have included a six-figure donation to Starlight Foundation, a non-profit that improves the lives of seriously ill children, Canadian Cancer Society, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, MS Canada, ALS Canada, World Vision, CP24 Chum Christmas Wish, Autism Canada, Children's Treatment Network and the Canadian Armed Forces Appreciation Program.

Northern Karate also implemented the Pink Belt Campaign, benefiting breast cancer research, which has been adopted across North America and Europe. The program also conducts food, clothing, and toy drives throughout the year and have funded outreach programs in Guinea, Africa.

We are so grateful to all Northern Karate parents and students for their hard work and dedication and for supporting the events, said De La Cruz. Most especially for their efforts and for raising lots of money. We know the kids love to get medals and trophies but they should all feel proud of doing something good for kids with special needs. Northern Karate Schools' mission is to provide the best martial arts and life skills education.