

Park auction will benefit patient care at Southlake hospital

By Brock Weir

If you've ever wanted to leave behind a lasting legacy in Aurora ? and have your name remembered for generations to come ? you will soon have your chance with Southlake Regional Health Centre.

A parkette near the intersection of Thomas Phillip Drive at St. John's Sideroad could bear your name, or the name of your choice, for perpetuity if you have the winning bid at the 20th Anniversary Southlake Black Tie Gala next Saturday, October 14.

Held every two years, the Black Tie Gala brings together hundreds of community business leaders and ?influential community members? to mingle with Southlake physicians, Board members and more for a night of live entertainment, gourmet dining, and a great chance to support the most urgent priorities at Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Sponsored by Magna International and Kerbel Group at the Platinum Level, as well as organizations such as Aurora Home Hardware, Priestly Demolition, New Roads Automotive and more, the Town of Aurora last week did its part by putting the parkette up for grabs.

It was welcome news to representatives of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation who came to Council last week asking for Council to ratify the decision made at the Committee level the previous week to once again make a parkette contribution.

?It is an evening for everyone to enjoy a unique and exclusive event with live and silent auctions, a lavish cocktail reception, a gourmet dinner and live entertainment, and all to support the hospital's most urgent priorities,? said David Basco of the Foundation.

?As with all hospitals, Southlake does not receive government funding to purchase new or replace equipment outside of capital builds. Critical and basic equipment like beds, surgical tools and machines are all funded through the generosity of the community and through events like the gala we will continue to provide world-class care close to home.?

Mr. Basco was joined at the podium by colleague Jennifer Kerr, who not only made the formal ask of Council but highlighted just what such a donation would mean to the lives and treatments of patients.

?Through the donations of parkettes, we have been able to raise over \$200,000 to support the urgent needs of our hospital; items like building the residential hospice, the cancer centre, and purchasing new beds for our patient rooms,? she said noting, of course, that the naming rights to the parkette would be sold to the highest bidder.

?All proceeds raised will support the most urgent needs of our hospital. We rely on our generous communities to support the most critical needs across the hospital so we can continue to provide the highest quality of care our patients expect and deserve. The fund will help us provide our clinical staff with the tools they need to make miracles happen every single day.?

Last year's parkette auction raised \$11,000 to the foundation and organizers are hoping to up the ante this year.

Despite the enthusiasm with which Council approved the Parkette request, it was tempered by some dismay with a perceived lack of government funding for the local health care provider, and those like it across the Province.

?The Provincial Government funds nearly 90 per cent of the capital costs, but actually that is 65 per cent of all the costs a hospital needs to operate,? said Councillor Wendy Gaertner. ?It is unfortunate that the government doesn't fund more of our operating costs.

The rest is basically up to the taxpayers and those who are going to the gala.?

Added Councillor Michael Thompson, encouraging Gala organizers to set a high opening bid for this hot piece of property, ?I think we all recognize the importance of our hospital and we all want to be supportive of it. We would certainly like to see it go for as high a figure as possible because we know the money will be put to good use.?

This year's Southlake Black Tie Gala will take place on Saturday, October 14, at the Universal Eventspace in Vaughan. Cocktails begin at 6 p.m., with dinner and entertainment beginning at 7.30 p.m. Individual tickets are \$500, benefiting the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation. For more information, visit www.southlakefoundation.ca.