

Run for Southlake heads north to Newmarket

By Brock Weir

It has been a long-standing Aurora tradition for over a decade, founded in honour of the late Aurora councillor Bob Hartwell, but now the annual Run for Southlake is moving to Newmarket.

The Run, formally dubbed the Hartwell Challenge in memory of the avid runner who died doing what he loved to do best, will unfold next year on Davis Drive, giving Southlake Regional Health Centre ? and its staff, patients and volunteers ? a front row seat to the action.

According to Steve Hinder, a member of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation, there have recently been challenges in Aurora. Past events have taken place each spring at the Aurora Community Centre but made the move two years ago to the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex with the run taking place on Wellington Street East and north on Leslie Street.

?We have struggled with routes in Aurora because we have had to constantly change,? says Mr. Hinder. ?Now, Leslie Street was going to be under construction for a period of time and now that [Davis Drive] construction is done?we wanted there to be a permanent route.

?Once the hospital became the beneficiary of the run, which has been over the last eight or nine years, the long-term goal has always been to incorporate the hospital. We have tried all kinds of different options in terms of half-marathon, the 10K, and it and it has turned out that the 5K is, in fact, the most popular. The 5k is an event that not only allows families to participate ? and it is a fundraiser we're providing for the hospital. To allow the participants to run in front of the hospital a couple of times and have patients out on the bridge over Davis Drive. The fact Davis Drive has been under construction for a number of years is the reason we didn't do it sooner.?

Last year, the number of participants enrolled for the Run for Southlake was lower than at previous events, says Mr. Hinder. The weather worked against them, there was construction along the route, and there were other ?Challenges? that had to be addressed. ?It was difficult for them to even get to the site,? says Mr. Hinder. ?It wasn't through lack of effort from any of the planning group or whatnot, it is because the community is changing ? and Davis Drive is not changing. Once you do it once, you have a route established. If you look at any of the big races and runs anywhere else, they have the same route every year, people know what to expect, and it does help grow the event and increase the numbers. It is a fundraiser and that is the goal.?

As a colleague of Mr. Hartwell at Council, Mr. Hinder says Bob would be ?thrilled? to see the event move to Southlake because it ?benefits the greater population that supports the hospital and?its patients on an ongoing sustainable basis.?