

Six-year-old captains team for Southlake Run ? putting a new spin on his birthday party



By Brock Weir

Most seven-year-olds count down the days to their birthday. Their wish lists grow with each passing day, and their birthday party plans might inch closer and closer to Cirque du Soleil every year.

Alfonzo Boseovski, however, is not most seven-year-olds.

The Hartman Public School student turns seven on Sunday and rather than booking a swimming pool or a bowling alley to celebrate with his family and friends, he is captaining a team and taking to the streets for the 2014 Run or Walk for Southlake, sponsored by Nature's Emporium.

The Run or Walk for Southlake was initially founded in 2002 as the Hartwell Challenge, in memory of then-councillor Bob Hartwell, who died aged just 54 while running the Toronto Marathon.

Now in its 14th year, organizers hope to reach a goal of \$175,000 for the local hospital and Alfonzo's team is ready to do its part.

Alfonzo wanted to give back to Southlake after several trips to the hospital both as a patient as a visitor to family members.

?I got stitches in the hospital,? he explains. ?I was at school and people were spraying water. There was water on the ground and I slipped and hit my chin! I've been there maybe five times, but the first time was probably when I sprained my ankle.?

?And the last time was when mommy had her surgery,? his father Jovan reminds him. ?Daddy has never been there ? just visiting!?

Alfonzo's mother, Deneb, was treated at Southlake for what ultimately turned out to be a benign lumpectomy. For her and Jovan, giving back to the community and being a part of it, are values they want to instill in their children, including daughter ? and team co-captain ? Kira, who turns 2 on April 30.

?The main thing is we are privileged,? says Deneb. ?We live in a nice town with nice people, and giving back is one of the values we want to instill in them. Not everybody has that opportunity. If you have that chance, especially if you take care of your community, it will make it better. We want to teach them to take care of and give back to where they live ? and every time we have been to Southlake they have treated us well.?

In the lead-up to Alfonzo's birthday, Jovan says the family was brainstorming ideas of what to do. They've taken the kids and their

friends to Bruce's Mill to celebrate their birthdays, they've done their birthday party at Gateway Lanes, and they've even rented out the pool at Newmarket's Magna Centre, but they wanted to do something a little bit out of the ordinary this year.

'We thought if we were going to do the run, why not just invite people and have a team,' says Jovan. 'A lot of people thought it was a cool and good idea, but some people were confused saying, 'Hold on, what's going on exactly?' We explained it to them and it has been almost entirely positive feedback.

'I think people are eager to participate and hopefully raise some money for the hospital. We are not raising a lot of money, but I think \$400 is a decent goal. When people go to a birthday party, they will spend at least \$30 on toys and we figure he doesn't need any more toys. All he wants to do is ride his bike and he's got one!'

The Boseovski family moved to Aurora from Willowdale five years ago. After looking at over 200 houses in just about every city and town in the Greater Toronto Area, Aurora was the place for them. It was a sense of community, they say, they did not find anywhere else and that sense made all the difference.

'I tell my husband that where you live is not only about a house, but it is the community that makes the difference,' says Deneb. 'I think Aurora is the place for us. Alfonzo loves it, it makes him happy, he loves his school, community centres, friends, and I hope he grows up with that sense.

'I hope others can see opportunities and different ways to do things. I love giving [my kids] their birthday party, their gifts, and all of those things, but this is a chance for them to learn and also plant a seed in other people to do a bit of good in that day. He will get the company of the people and to learn the universe goes beyond yourself.'