

## Southlake Run crosses milestone \$520,000 fundraising mark

Community participation in the 2026 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake made it a record-busting spring for supporting local health care.

The numbers have been crunched and this year's fundraiser raised more than \$520,000 for the Southlake Health Foundation, the most the event has raised in its 24-year history.

"We are beyond thrilled with the enthusiasm, the participation, and willingness to fundraising for leading-edge care close to home at this year's Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake," said Jennifer Ritter, President & CEO of Southlake Foundation. "This event continues to be galvanizing for our communities and inspires runners and walkers from across York Region and Simcoe County to lace-up and raise funds for a cause that means so much to us all.

"We often say at Southlake that if you don't have your health, nothing else matters, and that's a message that resonates with so many."

Added Dr. Paul Woods, President & CEO of Southlake Health: "The overwhelming support of our communities show Southlake Health is truly inspiring, and I'm grateful for everyone who walked, ran, and fundraised during this year's event. As Southlake continues to transform care across northern York Region and southern Simcoe County over the decade ahead, our communities' ability to empower change through their caring support will be vital."

The Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake has its roots in Aurora, first hosted as the Hartwell Challenge, in memory of Councillor and runner Bob Hartwell, who died while running a marathon.

The Hartwell Challenge took place in Aurora for more than a decade, first at the Aurora Community Centre where participants fanned out on routes throughout the neighbouring streets, then at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, where participants took over Wellington Street East. For the last decade, the event has been hosted on Newmarket's Davis Drive, home base for Southlake.

Two decades on, Aurora was well-represented in this year's fundraising stakes, with Aurora Montessori School taking the School Challenge Cup and the Town of Aurora itself securing the Community Spirit Award.

The top municipal fundraiser this year was the Town of Newmarket, taking the Mayor's Challenge from last year's winners in East Gwillimbury.

As the Southlake Run looks ahead to its 25th anniversary, the value the event brings to the community is clear to the title sponsor.

"As a community-based business, we believe the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake brings our values as a business to life - supporting health, encouraging wellness, and creating space for our community members to show up for one another," said Nature's Emporium CEO Steve Hollingsworth. "It's an absolute honour for Nature's Emporium to partner with Southlake Health Foundation, its volunteers, the participants, and our communities, to support leading edge care close to home through this event. We're so grateful to everyone who gave their time and their generosity to make this year such a success."

By Brock Weir  
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