

Southlake Run helps support hidden costs at local hospital

By Brock Weir

It is a common misconception that the Provincial Government provides funding for the equipment that makes Southlake Regional Health Centre stand tall among Ontario hospitals.

The facts are simple: each piece of equipment at Southlake, and indeed all provincial hospitals, is funded by the community for the community ? and, next month, the community can give a significant boost to the hospital just by taking a step forward.

The countdown is now on for the 2019 Nature's Emporium Run or Walk for Southlake, which will take place in Newmarket on Sunday, April 28.

Formerly the Hartwell Challenge, named after the late Aurora Councillor Bob Hartwell, the Run for Southlake is a 5k road race aiming to raise over \$250,000 for the hospital.

?With the health care system changing, a growing community and a growing system, a new strategic plan is in place with some very aggressive but achievable goals,? said Brian North, Chair of the Southlake Run, while throwing down the gauntlet to local Council members to get involved. ?Over the course of the year, there were over 113,000 emergency department visits, almost 25,000 in-patient admissions, that's 68 new patients per day requiring a bed, over 40,000 surgeries and 536,671 outpatient visits.

?The Run for Southlake is the biggest annual fundraiser for the hospital, which started in Aurora as the Bob Hartwell Run, [named after] a former Councillor of Aurora who passed away while participating in the Toronto Marathon. Bob's wife, Barb, sat on the Southlake Foundation Board for many years and was pleased when in 2011 the name was changed to the Run for Southlake, raising over \$1.5 million to the hospital in the past eight years alone.?

The Southlake Run moved to Newmarket in 2017, achieving a goal to end the race under the hospital's iconic Davis Drive arch. It was a complete sell-out the following year and this time around organizers have increased capacity by 300 to a total of 1,800 runners.

?We rely on the community to raise funds for 100 per cent of most new and replacement tools, equipment and technology,? Mr. North continued, ?and use those funds to support the most urgent needs across the hospital.?

Council members recently had the opportunity to tour the hospital and meet with Arden Krystal, who was appointed CEO of Southlake Regional Health Centre in 2017, as well as Susan Mullin, CEO of the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation.

Councillors said they learned a great deal on the visit, but underscored the fact that so much of Southlake's care is directly supported by the community through the Foundation and fundraisers such as the Run.

“A lot of times I know people sort of think hospitals are provincially funded and get the money for the operation of the hospital, but that is not always the case,” said Councillor Michael Thompson.

Councillor Sandra Humfries agreed, adding: “It is very important that everyone understand that and participate.”

“The government pays for staffing and some new technology at the hospital, but equipment is completely paid [for] by the community,” said Mr. North. “All funds are raised for new beds, MRIs, CAT Scans and whatever equipment that is needed. It is all raised by the community. Right now, there is about a \$300 million budget set for fundraising in the course of 10 years just to keep up with the community. 113,000 people visiting the hospital in emergency each year is like 15 per cent higher than was ever expected for that hospital. It is at capacity.”

For more information on the 2019 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake, visit southlakefoundation.ca.