

Southlake Run raises \$127,000...and counting



By Brock Weir

Over 1,700 runners and walkers descended on the Aurora Community Centre on Sunday morning for the annual Nature's Emporium Run/Walk for Southlake.

A cool morning with a lot of sun got everybody up on their feet and onto the streets to run the 10k, 5k, 2k, and Kids' Mini Mile all in the name of raising funds for Southlake Regional Health Centre.

To date, \$127,000 in pledges have been raised so far, and dollars are expected to continue rolling in until online pledges close on May 15. Opportunities are still open to help organizers reach their \$175,000 goal.

It is wonderful to see so many people here to support our great community hospital, said Mike Smith, member of the Southlake Board, pumping up the crowd before runners hit the pavement for the 10k. What amazes me about this as a community event is it has evolved from a small group of friends here to honour a friend who was a runner and an Aurora citizen by the name of Bob Hartwell and it is amazing it has come so far. Three years ago, the Hartwell Challenge suggested that Southlake be the benefactor of this event and it has taken on a whole new life, which is fantastic. We would like to remember Bob Hartwell in our run today as well as the committee.

Runners took to the streets, some in their very best running gear, while others took things a bit more casually, or even in costume, looking to have some fun while helping a great cause.

Some were wearing distinctive shirts emblazoned with a hugging family designed by young Isabella and Olivia Polito, who had many reasons to be thankful to their local hospital. Not only were they born there, but without the hospital they might not have been joined on stage by their parents, Sal and Deann.

The hospital saved my daddy's life, said Olivia.

According to Sal, after a day at Toronto's Science Centre, he came home feeling unwell. Soon, he went into cardiac arrest. When the EMS came, they took me to Southlake where I received excellent care and here I am today because of Southlake, he

said.

Added Deann: ?Before Sal was sick, we only had two positive life experiences at Southlake with the birth of our daughters. Now, Southlake to us means that I have my entire family. Isabella was born premature and we spent some time there, and then they saved Sal's life, so it means a lot to have a hospital close to us. They have amazing doctors and they have amazing equipment that helped save his life and I would also like to send a special shout out to all the nurses here at Southlake because they were amazing during both of our stays there.?