

Take the Pledge campaign aims to get Aurorans moving



By Brock Weir

We've all had that resolution at one time or another to get more active, but how many of us actually follow through once those New Year's Resolutions lose their lustre midway through January?

Activate Aurora is looking to get residents over that hump with the Take the Pledge Challenge.

Officials from the campaign descended on Town Hall on Tuesday morning to have Mayor Geoff Dawe and Council members 'Take the Pledge' signalling their commitment to add more physical activity into their daily routine.

The Take the Pledge challenge was launched last fall and has since taken the show on the road to a number of local community events, but, now that springtime is here, the Campaign is kicking it up a notch on the road to their stated goal of making Aurora 'Canada's Most Active Community.'

'It is all about trying to improve and increase the number of people participating in healthy, physical activity, which is the mission of Activate Aurora,' explains Activate Aurora's Ron Weese. 'We wanted to start a campaign to raise awareness, number one, and, number two, engage people and help them get started.'

'Taking the pledge has its origin in goal setting and exercise psychology, which means that in order to move from one stage to the next, people have to have realistic and achievable goals. One of those goals, for us, is for them to take the pledge to be more physically active over the next six to eight months. It is not only an awareness campaign, but a way to help people get started making a commitment to being more active.'

There is no set definition through this campaign on just what 'more active' is.

It's different for everybody 'and letting people set their own goals is something Mr. Weese says he believes is a key to success.

'One of the barriers people have is they often make goals that are unachievable,' he says. 'What we would prefer to do is help them make a pledge to be more active and then provide them with the resources from our website so they can become more active and they can become more active in a variety of ways: by simply walking; if you're a squash player, by playing squash more often; if you're a runner, you can run more often. It really is about making a change that is personal for you.'

This is very much the case for Mr. Weese.

One of the first steps on his road to becoming more active was buying a personal tracker and setting a goal of taking 10,000 steps per day. Since he made that commitment, he regularly monitors his steps to make sure he reaches his goal in being active each and every day.

'I was physically active, but there were days I found I wasn't being active,' he expands. 'The easiest change for me is not to set the goal too high. A lot of people fail because they aren't excited about doing things. We see this happening at New Year's. Changes in lifestyle tend to be more successful if they are gradual, progressive and reasonable.'

'What we try to move people away from is this pre-contemplative state where they don't really know what they should be doing. Then they become contemplative realising that they should be doing something but they don't really know how. The next stage is

preparation, which is how do I get started? We're trying to get them into that preparation stage and move into action. It is about setting reasonable goals and taking a pledge.

?The other thing about pledge taking is when you do it, it is public. It is you declaring. There are a lot of studies, whether it is in business, or whether it is in physical activity, that people who set goals for themselves and make those goals public, either with or through their family, tend to achieve those goals a lot more often than those who don't take that first step.?

Throughout 2018, the Take the Pledge challenge will continue full force. They will be a fixture at local events, giving people free shoelaces asking people to take the pledge online. They will also be touring local businesses and corporations encouraging a team effort.

?Activate Aurora is doing whatever it can do to help people become more active and it has been an interesting journey for the first half of our three year project. I think we're approaching five or eight thousand people annually who have been impacted by what we're doing, so we're really quite happy with the response we've had from schools, our walk to school campaigns, and our after school programs. We're really building capacity this year so next year we can work on sustainability,? said Mr. Weese.

Pledge Boxes will be placed at Town Hall, the Joint Operations Centre, the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, and Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex through April 13 collecting employee pledges. Meanwhile, Aurorans at large can find out more about taking the pledge at www.activateaurora.ca.