

Thousands turn out for annual Run or Walk for Southlake



By Jake Courtepatte

Rain or shine, one thing is for certain:
the annual Run or Walk for Southlake has York Region residents coming out in
droves.

Close to 1,700 people turned out for
Sunday's annual event, taking to the streets of Newmarket around the Region's
hospital.

Luckily for this year's pack of runners,
the sun was out on a chilly April morning.

Held in Newmarket for the third year,
racers and cheer squads alike gathered at Newmarket's Seniors' Meeting Place before
following a five-kilometre path down Davis Drive.

Boasting a lofty fundraising goal of
\$200,000, the largest ever for the event, the total is close and still rising:
over \$177,000 has been raised at press time.

Southlake Foundation president Susan
Mullin said security measures were increased this year to allow for a larger
attendance, after seeing around 1,500 racers take to the course last year,
which closes down a stretch of Davis Drive to allow for the course.

The Cancer Centre Cruisers once again
set the bar for team funds raised, topping the list at around \$20,000 raised to
win the Team Challenge. Team Aurora was at the top of the list for the Mayor's
Challenge, a fun and friendly competition between the mayors of the York
municipalities.

?I'm not going to lie, I'm exhausted,?
said Mayor Tom Mrakas, who led the way in bringing in close to \$10,000 for the cause. ?But I want to take a moment to thank everyone, for all the support they gave to Team Aurora and myself. We won the Mayor's Challenge, we're very proud of it, and we're very proud to support our hospital, Southlake.?

King Chicks and Jocks, led by King Councillor
Avia Eek, finished a close second in the mayoral race, raising around \$10,000 in total.

With the first runners pulling up to a
cheering crowd at the finish line around 9:30am, family and friends were entertained by George St. Kitts, a Juno-nominated Motown artist from Toronto, at the Centre's Athlete Village.

The Run or Walk for Southlake is the
largest community fundraiser held annually by Southlake Foundation, raising vital funds to purchase new and replacement equipment across the hospital. Current equipment needs include anesthesia machines, operating room lights and hospital beds and mattresses, all critical elements to providing world-class care to Southlake's patients in York Region and the surrounding communities.

Having flourished into the grand
spectacle it is today since its beginnings in 2002, the bar has been raised each year in terms of raised funds.

Now in its seventeenth year, the event
has raised over \$1-million netted in its span.

Since the inception of the Southlake
Foundation in 1980, the parent organizer of the annual event, more than \$100 million has been raised for the Centre.

Donations can still be made at
www.southlakefoundation.ca.