

## Volunteer Brian North honoured with Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship



After donning a suit and tie for a virtual meeting on Wednesday afternoon, Aurora's Brian North was quickly off to spend some time on a cause very close to his heart: the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake.

One of the local hospital's biggest annual fundraisers, it's a community event he has been heavily involved in for more than a decade.

By the time he was back in his volunteer duds this week, however, he had something else under his sleeve: the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship.

Mr. North, a 2019 Honouree, formally received his medal from Lieutenant-Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Queen's representative in Ontario, last week alongside 21 other community builders.

He was honoured not just for his tireless work on behalf of the Run for Southlake but also for organizations as varied as the Optimist Club of Aurora to the Aurora United Church's rebuilding committee.

“Brian North is what Optimists inspire to be,” read his citation. “He injects his positivity into various community initiatives, including Regional fundraisers and environmental clean-ups. He has shared his time with numerous organizations including Easter Seals, Habitat for Humanity, Scouts Canada, York Small Business Enterprise Centre and the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation.

“For Brian North, the glass isn't half-full, it's overflowing: a true Optimist and member of the Aurora Optimist Club, Mr. North injects positivity into every task he tackles. Each year, he lobbies over 1,000 people to participate in the planning and execution of the Run for Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation and takes a lead role in the Environmental Cleanup at Aurora's Magna Hoedown.

“Whatever Mr. North puts his mind to, people approach and ask, ‘What can I do to help?’ Today, he is helping lead the construction of Aurora United Church which burned down a few years ago. With Mr. North's upbeat sense of purpose, it is sure to happen.”

For Mr. North, who has previously been named Aurora's Citizen of the Year, this latest honour was particularly timely as it came just two days before the eighth anniversary of the fire which devastated the beloved local place of worship and little more than a week out from the Run for Southlake on April 24.

“I am so humbled,” said Mr. North the day after receiving the medal. “I am shocked by [some of the comments] I have received. The

Run for Southlake obviously means a lot to me. I have been involved in it for 13 years now ? the hospital means a lot to me and it means a lot to all of us. It touches us all. For it to come together at this time is neat. [At the Run] I see a lot of people I wouldn't normally see and now that the award is out in the open I am sure people will stop and talk to me who don't normally stop and talk. I know it sounds cliché [to be humbled by something like this] but it is so true. How I met most of my friends and the people I know has been through volunteering; you don't do it to get awards, but when you do get them it almost becomes embarrassing.

?Some people say once you get an award you slow down, but I don't slow down. I still have a job to get done. The award means the world to me, especially coming from the Lieutenant-Governor. Something like this keeps you moving and I am going to see these projects through to the end and I will stay with the Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake as long as they want me to. They are probably coming to a time when they need a change and get rid of people like me because it has been too long, but as long as they need me or I can be of use to them, I will probably stick around!?

For more on this weekend's 2022 Nature's Emporium Run for Southlake, visit [southlake.ca/foundation](https://southlake.ca/foundation).

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter