

Walk for Wellness raises funds for seniors programming



By Jake Courtepatte

Keeping the body moving is important at any age: just ask Aurora's seniors.

Multiple generations walked side-by-side Saturday at the walking track in the Aurora Family Leisure Complex for the annual Walk for Wellness, put on by Community and Home Assistance to Seniors, or CHATS.

Held for the first time in Aurora after years at Upper Canada Mall in Newmarket, CHATS teamed up with Activate Aurora to help promote a healthy and active lifestyle for seniors in the community.

Ron Weese, Executive Director of Activate Aurora, said events like these are crucial for getting seniors engaged both socially and physically.

"Getting out and being active is important at any age," said Weese. "No matter what the activity is, as long as it gets you moving." CHATS, having grown to almost one-thousand volunteers and staff since its implementation in 1980, provides home care and community programs to more than 7,700 seniors and caregivers in York Region and South Simcoe each year.

Examples include adult day programs, assisted living, Meals on Wheels, and transportation.

All money raised for the event, brought in through donations to the walking participants, went directly to providing these crucial programs and services.

For the first time in eight years, the Walk officially partnered with organizations throughout the community to bring the event to life, namely Activate Aurora, the Aurora Seniors' Association, the Town of Aurora, and Club Aurora Fitness Centre.

Tim Jones, Director of Development for CHATS, said it was these partnerships that made the Walk one of the most successful yet. "Everyone came up huge this year. We're definitely going to be continuing with partnerships in the future."

Also on hand was Shawn Nisbet, Aurora's Nordic pole walking extraordinaire who provided a free workshop, as well as Gord McCallum, a local registered massage therapist.

"Events like this don't happen without help and volunteering from a lot of people," said Jones. "It's good to see the community come together to help such a great cause."

MP Kyle Peterson, who couldn't join the walk due to a sprained ankle, stopped by to support what he called "an organization that does great work for such a large community."

"I'm already looking forward to next year's event," said Peterson. "Hopefully I'll be able to walk by then!"

MPP Chris Ballard said through speaking with York Region's seniors, and the children of those seniors, he can see the importance of events like the Walk that raise funds for the cause.

"Improving the lives of our seniors is something that often is overlooked, but with those at CHATS, it's at the top of their minds. I like to mention CHATS as often as I can in Queen's Park, but these people are actually here in the community making a difference." To learn more about CHATS, visit www.chats.on.ca.