

New Roads and Neal Brothers raise \$30,000 for Southlake

By the middle of spring, countless signs dotted lawns across our community thanking frontline workers for their efforts in keeping us safe, healthy and fed when the world first began grappling with the realities of COVID-19.

Some were homemade, some were more colourful than others, but each one was heartfelt ? and some helped raise money to help those very frontline workers the signs thanked.

One such initiative was spearheaded by New Roads Automotive and Neal Brothers Foods, and both companies were saluted by Health Minister Christine Elliott last Wednesday morning as they presented a cheque of more than \$30,000 to Southlake Regional Health Centre.

Coming together, the two companies carried out the fundraising campaign, which, in exchange for a donation to what was ultimately presented to the hospital, signs were printed and installed by members of the New Roads team.

?We're celebrating a great coming together of two groups ? New Roads as well as Neal Brothers Foods ? to do a wonderful thing for Southlake,? said Ms. Elliott. ?With your sign campaign and the connections and networks that you have, [you have been] able to raise \$30,000 for Southlake, our crown jewel of healthcare in Newmarket-Aurora who are doing an amazing job in helping heal people who have contracted COVID-19 and to set them back on a path to health and wellbeing.

?This is something we take for granted, that our frontline workers are just going to go out and do that work, but they need to have protection, they need to have the masks, ventilators, face shields, gowns and all of that. They are going to be able to do that with \$30,000 and this is huge for them.?

People often think that there is money at the ready for these resources, but this isn't always the case, said Ms. Elliott, who noted the struggle in the early part of this pandemic to source enough proper pieces of Personal Protective Equipment, particularly N95 masks, to help Ontario hospitals safely fight the virus.

This point was underscored by Southlake's Tyler Chalk who said there was ?anxiety, fear, and uncertainty every day? at the start of the pandemic.

?Things were changing and we didn't know how to treat this disease, we didn't know what the best practices were, and we were creating them on the fly,? said Chalk. ?One of the things that made a huge impact and continues to make a huge impact, is the support the community has provided.

?One of the really unique things that made a huge difference that I hear about from our physicians and staff all the time is people seeing those signs on the way into work in the morning and when you're heading into your shift and you're nervous or scared about what is happening and seeing those signs really put our staff and our physicians with more confidence to know the community was by their side. At the end of that shift, when they are heading home late at night or in the morning, depending if they were overnight, no matter how hard that day was, no matter what they saw or the difficult situations they were in, seeing those signs on the way home also put them in that good standing to go back to their families. It was almost like these signs were a bookend at the morning and at the end of the day.?

For New Roads, stepping up to help Southlake Regional Health Centre in this time of global emergency was a natural step in keeping with the company's values and pillars, according to New Roads President & CEO Michael Croxon. Their initial thought was, he said, ?How do we best support our community in this time of crisis??

?We scrambled because lots of people were doing lots of things, we did some stuff in terms of using our resources to deliver food to those who couldn't get out of their house through various organizations,? he said. ?We organized through the efforts of Kelly

Broome (Manager of Community Relations for New Roads) to pull off our New Roads Ride to the Lake in a virtual fashion, which was a success and resulted in a separate contribution to Southlake in the Spring. When my friend Chris Neal came up with the idea, he said, 'Somebody delivered a sign to my lawn. It is not really that well made but this is something you guys could get behind,' it just seemed like a no-brainer.

I credit Chris the marketing guy with the idea and I credit the rest of our organization with the execution which, after a few bumps, really came together. It was through Kelly's leadership and initiative and many of our associates' efforts that got signs delivered all over the northern 905 when people would go on the website? Thank you, Kelly. It was amazing to see people who were on layoff were putting up their hands to come in and deliver signs and that is, I think, a reflection of the spirit of New Roads and the type of people we have working here.?

By Brock Weir