

Hometown Heroes

Local running group clocks serious kilometres, dollars in support of Salvation Army Kettle Drive

Saturday Morning Runners raise over \$4K through '12 Days of Running' campaign

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LISTOWEL – As the weather gets colder and the days become shorter, it starts to get pretty difficult to stay physically active during the winter months.

The Listowel-based Saturday Morning Runners (SMR) group faces this predicament annually. There's no question that running or walking outdoors amidst the snow and cold of winter in midwestern Ontario isn't easy. Motivation can also become a barrier.

The group decided this year to inject some motivation into the equation by organizing a fundraiser for the Listowel Salvation Army Kettle Drive. Ten members of SMR initially set out to run/walk 1,000 km and raise \$1,000 over its '12 Days of Running' campaign in late November, wrapping up on Dec. 2.

"It started in the spring with COVID, we started to have run challenges to motivate ourselves," explained group member and North Perth Westfield Elementary School teacher Tyler Schaefer. "The idea came about a month ago where we could do the 12 Days of Running. We know that in October, November, December it gets darker and it's harder to motivate

ourselves to get out.

"We thought the Salvation Army is going to need the money, and that if we started in November it would start to build some awareness before the Christmas rush."

The group did a little better than its original goal. A lot better. In actuality, the fundraisers crushed it.

"We smashed our goal but because people continue to donate, we feel like we need to keep going and keep thanking them for what they've done," said SMR member Lisa Schaefer last Tuesday, one day prior to the fundraiser's completion. "We continue to give it our all – everything we have – for the full 12 days."

As of Dec. 4, the 12 Days of Running brought in \$4,158, after running/walking 1,232 km as a group. And some of those 12 days weren't the most cooperative in terms of weather, especially after the heavy snowfall early last week.

It didn't seem to bother participants Vince Leary and Thaddeus Homewood, who logged approximately 450 km of the total between them.

"I enjoy winter running," said Leary, who has been a member of SMR for around five years. "I prefer running in cold than hot – I'm a terrible hot-weather runner. I would much rather



Dan McNee Photo

Saturday Morning Running (SMR) group members, from left, Warren Wray, Tyler and Lisa Schaefer, Thaddeus Homewood and Vince Leary, are pictured on a section of the North Perth Trail in central Listowel on Dec. 2. The SMR recently completed a fundraising campaign for the Listowel Salvation Army branch that saw group members run/walk 1,232 km over 12 days, raising nearly \$4,200 for the organization's Christmas Kettle Drive.

er run in the cold."

"This actually isn't that bad yet," gestured Homewood to the snow flurry picking up momentum around him last Tuesday. "When the wind really starts to bite into your face and you start to lose feeling is tougher."

Homewood ran over 270 km individually during the campaign, amazingly fitting a late-November marathon in there to boot. His grandparents served as pastors of the Salvation Army Church, and both his parents are heavily involved with volunteering

for the Listowel Salvation Army Community and Family Services branch.

Needless to say, the cause is close to his heart.

"It's good," he said. "The community helps so much."

SMR has seen its ranks grow since being established several years ago; 2020 saw more and more people around North Perth taking to municipal streets, trails and parks to run or walk at the height of the first wave of the pandemic. The group's Facebook following has grown as well, with anyone of any ability

encouraged to join.

There is no exclusive aspect, just a shared passion for being active with the added bonus this holiday season of helping out a local charitable organization and the community that it continues to support during one of the longest, toughest years in recent memory.

"It's just to encourage people to be active and have a group to share it with," said Lisa Schaefer of the SMR. "Sometimes when you're doing these individual sports you feel by yourself, and it's just nice to have a community. And the ket-

gles we feel right now are such an important aspect of our community; we know they're going to be hit this year, they're not going to get what they have in the past, because more people need help.

"We're just really thrilled to be helping something that we all feel really good to be supporting."

The SMR 12 Days of Christmas campaign continues to accept donations; monetary contributions for the Listowel Salvation Army Christmas Kettle Drive can be made online at bit.ly/smrkettle.

New U 'Spinathon' supports local Salvation Army branch

\$600 raised through four-hour cycling session

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LISTOWEL – In addition to some intense cardio being performed, the New U Personal Training Studio in Listowel was the site of some outstanding community goodwill in support of a terrific cause on Dec. 5.

Groups of fundraisers gathered at the local gym on Saturday to participate in a four-hour 'Spinathon' cycling session to raise money for the Listowel Salvation Army Community and Family Services

food bank. Participants took on two-hour or four-hour segments, raising \$600 while bringing in countless food, clothing, gifts and toiletries for donation.

One generous donor even contributed a brand-new guitar after the food bank requested gifts for children aged 10-14.

"I've been wanting to do a Spinathon for a while now and even though it looked much different this year, I'm thankful we were able to make it all work and still keep everyone safe," commented New U Owner Alison Brown.



Contributed Photos

Participants in the New U Personal Training Studio's Dec. 5 Spinathon complete their two or four-hour cycling sessions in support of the Listowel Salvation Army; (Left) New U instructor Corrie Boer on her stationary bike.

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