

Media Release

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For Immediate Release

York Region residents don running shoes for 29th Annual Easter Seals Run/Walkathon

Record crowd expected at event founded by local entrepreneur, philanthropist

NEWMARKET – *The Annual Easter Seals Run/Walkathon founded by Joe Persechini* gets bigger and better every year and has raised more than \$2.9 million to date towards assisting children with physical disabilities by funding costly equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, and communication devices and providing accessible recreational experiences at Easter Seals camps.



The annual Newmarket-based Run/Walkathon will kick off its 29th year on **Sunday, May 29th at the Upper Canada Mall in Newmarket** (located at the northwest corner of Yonge St. and Davis Dr.) and is expected to attract more than 3,000 participants and 300 volunteers.

Photo: Run/Walkathon participants at last year's run raised more than \$100,000

The Easter Seals Run/Walkathon is a nine kilometre, closed street course, suitable for runners and walkers of all ages.

Registration is open from 7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. with the Run/Walkathon starting at 8:30 a.m. The route starts at Upper Canada Mall and proceeds north on Yonge Street; west on Green Lane; south on Bathurst; east on Highway 9 and back to the Upper Canada Mall.

The Easter Seals Run/Walkathon was founded in 1976 by local Newmarket businessman and philanthropist Joe Persechini. That year, 65 runners collected \$2,700 for the Easter Seal Society, Ontario and ran from the Persechini Fitness Centre on Davis Drive to Bradford.

“The event has become an annual tradition that draws people from every corner of York Region. It is a wonderful example of our ability to pull together for a great cause while at the same time fostering true community spirit” said York Regional Chair Bill Fisch, this year’s Run/Walkathon’s Honorary Chair. “Few events of this magnitude are able to sustain the level of enthusiasm and commitment that the Easter Seals Run/Walkathon embodies year after year.”

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“It can cost a family as much as \$40,000 per year to raise a child with a physical disability,” said Newmarket resident and Regional Councillor, Tony Van Bynen, who has been on the Run/Walkathon Executive Committee for more than 20 years. “There are many of these families right here in York Region and several in Newmarket. The money raised from this event contributes directly to their quality of life and in so doing, supports our community fabric and well-being. I encourage everyone to come out to support a great cause”.

“Without the help of all of our participants, volunteers and sponsors, many children with physical disabilities would lead lives of isolation and would never achieve their potential,” added Joe Persechini, who said he feels that one of his most important roles as the Run/Walkathon’s founder is to be at the finish line to thank everyone in person. “It is my hope that with this year’s proceeds, we will top the \$3 million mark raised since our humble beginnings in 1976. So, from the bottom of my heart to all who make this event a great success ... thank you, thank you, thank you – for caring all these years!”

For nearly 30 years, thousands of people – including infants in strollers and even some octogenarians – have participated in the Run/Walkathon, which has grown into the largest fundraising event in York Region in support of Easter Seals kids. Most of the Newmarket and area schools have entered teams as have York Regional Police, York Region, local area businesses and all of the major financial institutions.

Pre-registration in Upper Canada Mall will take place on Thursday, May 26th, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Friday, May 27th, 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturday, May 28th, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

For more information on the Easter Seal Society and the Run/Walkathon, visit: www.persechinirun.org

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Media Contacts: Shannon Ketelaars, Run/Walkathon Manager
The Easter Seal Society, Ontario
1-800-668-6252 / (416) 421-8377 ext. 323
Email: sketelaars@easterseals.org

Ken Turriff, Corporate Communications
York Region
(905) 830-4444 or 1-877-464-9675, ext. 1226
Email: ken.turriff@york.ca