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Fort Town Night Run canceled; goes virtual

PRESCOTT - One of the largest public events on Prescott's calendar was all set to go for the last weekend in September, but as a result of rising coronavirus case counts in Ontario, the Fort Town Night Run was canceled.

A substantial number of participants in the race would have been coming from Ottawa and Toronto, and in a press release issued by Julie Larose, publicity coordinator for the Fort Town Night Run, both the town and the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit had concerns about drawing people into town from these virus hot spots.

The press release also noted that the town and the health unit requested certain additional safety

measures that would have been impractical and financially difficult for the volunteer organizing committee to put in place.

The Fort Town Night Run, however, still proceeded in a different way, as it was converted into a virtual run.

The press release also noted that all registered participants would still receive the medal, shirt and headlamp they would have at the in-person event, as well as the swag bag filled with items donated by the town and the generous local business community. Awards would also still be handed out.

"Our Community Spirit Award is being converted into the Virtual Spirit Award for the participants

who send us the best picture of their running spirit," says Larose. "The Team Spirit Award will also be chosen in this way."

Larose noted that the Business Spirit Award would proceed as originally planned, with a prize going to the business with the most elaborately decorated storefront.

In a statement issued by Mayor Brett Todd, it was explained that despite the race organizers' careful planning and the extensive safety measures they put in place, some concerns were raised at a recent regular meeting of the Municipal Emergency Control Group (MECG), which has been directing Prescott's pandemic response, that rising case numbers in Ontario, es-

pecially in Ottawa, might put the race at risk. The provincial government also reduced the allowable size of public gatherings.

It was suggested that race organizers restrict the race to only the racers themselves, with no friends or family in attendance, and also to bar runners from Ottawa and Toronto from participating. That would mean disinviting about 115 of the 350 people registered for the race.

Instead, race organizers decided to simply cancel the in-person event and run the race online.

"I fully support and understand the decision, and I greatly thank lead organizers Michel and Julie Larose and their

team of volunteers for their dedication to health and safety," wrote the mayor.

The Laroses and their team, though, tried to make the online event as memorable as possible, even filming the race-course and posting it so that virtual participants could at least see where they would have been running. The money collected from the virtual event will also still be put to good purpose.

"The funds raised will still be distributed this year to local youth programming," says Larose in the press release.

Larose also expressed the gratitude of the organizing team to all those people who gave so much of their time and energy in

support of the Fort Town Night Run.

"The organizers are deeply grateful to all the officials, volunteers, sponsors, businesses and community supporters for all their hard work and contributions toward this event," she said.

The mayor, in his statement, also wanted to thank all those who were involved in figuring out how best to proceed and for their commitment to public health and safety, giving credit to the organizers of the Fort Town Night Run, town staff, the health unit, the OPP and members of the MECG, and hoped that people who were looking forward to the race this year will understand why it had to be canceled.

Ontario improving concussion safety

The Ontario government will lead a discussion on the development of a National Concussion Awareness Strategy at an upcoming meeting of provincial and federal Ministers Responsible for Sport.

Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries returned to Rowan's Pitch in Ottawa recently to highlight the province's experience implementing Rowan's Law, Canada's first concussion safety legislation. Minister MacLeod was also joined by Tim Fleiszer, a four-time Grey Cup Champion and Executive Direc-

tor, Concussion Legacy Foundation Canada and Ryan Carey, Invictus Games torch bearer, former Canadian Football League player, and Afghanistan War Veteran.

"All athletes, coaches, players and parents, should know the signs and symptoms of a concussion and when to remove themselves from the game," said Minister MacLeod. "We have made real, impactful progress towards improving the safety of athletes and addressing the culture of amateur sports in this province. From launching an awareness campaign to implementing con-

cussion protocols in schools, we have a proven, effective approach to concussion safety. It is now time to take this approach across Canada."

Rowan's Law (Concussion Safety), 2018, was passed with unanimous support in the Ontario Legislature in March 2018. As part of the law, the last Wednesday in September is "Rowan's Law Day" in honour of the memory of Rowan Stringer, a 17-year-old Ottawa rugby player who died in the spring of 2013 from a condition known as Second Impact Syndrome (catastrophic swelling of the brain). This year, Rowan's Law

Day will be recognized on September 30, 2020.

"The unanimous passage of Rowan's Law at Queens Park in 2018 was a very special moment for Kathleen and I, another milestone in our journey after Rowan's death. This year marks the third Rowan's Law Day in Ontario, we have seen the marked improvements in concussion awareness and education in the first year, the increased requirements on sports organizations for concussion protocols and codes of conduct in the second year," said Gordon Stringer, father of Rowan Stringer.

"Now we look forward to an increased focus on healthcare practitioners, providing better supports and educational requirements to those tasked with addressing the multitude of potential issues and challenges faced by those impacted by concussion. Our hope is that what Ontario has done will be replicated across Canada, because in the words of Dr. Charles Tator, 'Rowan Stringer's death was preventable.' We must do whatever we can to ensure that her story is never replicated."

"Having had three children compete in hockey, soccer and other

sports in their youth, I view a concussion code of conduct as essential for our sports and recreational activities. And as a physician, I have seen what harm concussions can cause. So, it is significant that each year we take time to recognise Rowan's Law and the importance of concussion protocol," said Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care and MPP Kanata-Carleton.

Through video, print and digital media, Ontario is changing the conversation about how concussions are handled through its award-winning #HitStopSit campaign.