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Participants hit the pavement in the 11th annual Andrew Dunn Walk/Run May 13.

Photo by Daniel Melnyk

Andrew Dunn Walk/Run a success

By Tony Zerucha

Springfield came out to support one of their own on May 13 and in the process helped break the stigma surrounding mental illness.

More than 900 people gathered at the Oakbank Community Club for the 11th annual Andrew Dunn Walk/Run, held in support of andrewdunn.org, an organization dedicated to helping people living with mental illness and depression along with their families through the provision of services including suicide prevention education.

Participants ranged from serious runners to seniors in wheelchairs to families walking their dogs. Together they

raised an impressive sum, Judy Dunn said.

"At this very early stage, with more donations still coming in and e-mails and phone calls, our money is at about \$59,000," Dunn said.

While the walk and run was the day's focal point, there were plenty of other activities that allowed people to make a day of it, including music hosted by Hot 103 personality LTI, musicians en route, and a lunch prepared by the Kinsmen and Kinettes.

Dunn said she was humbled by the support of the more than 600 registered participants, the hundreds more who came on event day, the many volunteers and the growing number of sponsors.

"Our sponsorship is way up and they have been just amazing," Dunn said. "I cannot say enough good things about our sponsors and our community support. Who would ever have thought that a mental health awareness initiative (including suicide awareness) could ever have broken through that awful negative stigma. I could not be more inspired by that."

Dunn said her event would not have been possible without the support of a pair of local businesses.

"Co-op has been something else, and now Kelly's in Oakbank is really stepping up," Dunn said. "To have large or prominent businesses support mental health causes... they should be commended."

Donations continue for andrewdunn.org

Kevin Kelly, owner of Kelly's Bar in Oakbank, recently presented Judy Dunn and Jim McCarthy of andrewdunn.org with a cheque of \$2,500. The proceeds, raised through the bar's Friday Night meat draw, were donated in connection with the Andrew Dunn Walk/Run held in Oakbank May 13.

Kelly said the reason he wanted to become involved was because he was new to the region and he wanted to show his support for this very important and worthy cause.

Andrew Dunn corporate sponsor coordinator and meat draw chair Jim McCarthy said the meat draw began in January. The idea for the event came from a conversation between Kelly and Dunn almost a year ago.

"After working through some technicalities, (the meat draw) has proven to be a successful fund raiser," McCarthy said. "Only 30 entries are allowed in each of the two (Friday night) draws and the chances of winning a prize are excellent."

McCarthy credited the



Photo submitted

Nadine Hammersly (left), Judy Dunn, Jim McCarthy and Allan Donato with the \$2,500 donation to andrewdunn.org.

success of the meat draw to the Kelly's Bar Friday patrons and staff, especially Nadine Hammersly and Allan Donato, and the quality meat products supplied by Oakbank Family Foods.

Dunn graciously accepted the cheque on behalf of the committee stating

they were overwhelmed and truly appreciative of the support from all sponsors in an effort to eliminate the stigma of mental health issues and fight depression, one step at a time.

"As corporate sponsor coordinator for andrewdunn.org, I am amazed with the

amount of support we receive from this area of our province," McCarthy said. "It is obvious that mental health affects most if not all of us and the need to provide resources and support is necessary to help those struggling with mental health issues."