



Cochrane firefighters raise more than \$4,500 for Wellspring Calgary



CHELSEA KEMP

COCHRANE— Racing up and down the Cochrane Ranche stairs in 22 C and full firefighting equipment, Cochrane Fire Services members rallied to raise more than \$4,500 to fight cancer.

It was a challenging year for the Firefighter Stairclimb Challenge fundraiser for Wellspring Calgary, said Cochrane Fire Services Lieutenant of training Chris Chyka, and the department is proud of the results they were able to achieve.

"We're really proud that we were chosen this year as a competitive run site," Chyka said. "It was a little bit more special being able to run in our own town. We're really proud of how this played out this year."

To participate in the run firefighters were required to raise a minimum of \$250, Chyka said, and the team is grateful to those who donated to support an important cause.

The Firefighter Stairclimb Challenge was inspired by Kathy Blas, the sister of fallen fighter Gord Paul. All proceeds raised during the event support firefighters and Albertans fighting cancer.

Wellspring Calgary is a registered charity that offers free programs and services for those living with cancer, caregivers and youth. The non-profit provides a caring community in-person and online, designed to provide access to vital information, meaningful support and effective coping strategies for those living with cancer.

Cochrane firefighters were one of hundreds to participate in the Stairclimb Challenge in Support of Wellspring Calgary.

Typically, the event takes place at the Bow building in Calgary but was virtual this year with events taking place across Alberta from May 2 to 15.

Chyka said it was exciting to see the Cochrane Ranche selected as a site for the Stairclimb Challenge, but is hopeful to see a return to the traditional event next year.

During the challenge, participants ran the length of the Cochrane Ranche stairs 14 times to match the height of the Bow building— The equivalent of 1,204 steps or 774 vertical feet.

The location proved to be a challenge for firefighters, as running in the sun left many roasting in the heat of their gear.

"All of us got to the same point where we were at the 10th or 11th time up and you could just see us slow down significantly— It was one step at a time," Chyka said. "It was really tough. It was a real challenge— The sun was beating down so hard."

He added another major change in running the stairs is that it was difficult to establish a rhythm for the run. The hike proved harder at the stairs because of the platforms and the layout of the structure making it hard to get into a rhythm and maintain a steady space.

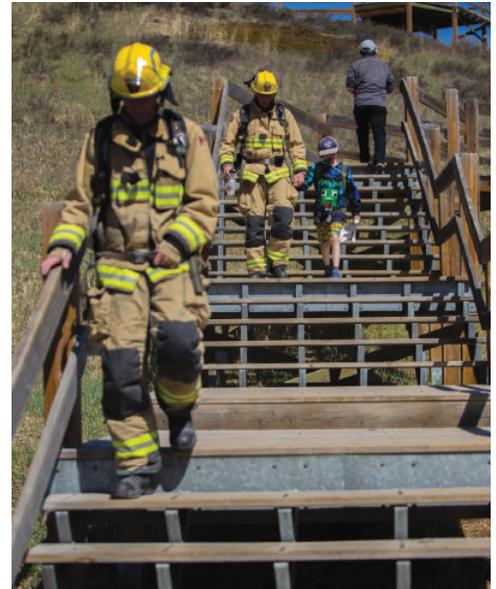
"There was a grouping at the top so there were three or four flights at the top and there were more landings or platforms at the bottom so it was some unique challenges that we weren't accustomed to."

Cochrane saw nine participants' average run times varying between 26 and 52 minutes. Chyka



Cochrane Fire Services' members Andrew Weaver and Matthew Cameron participate in the Firefighter Stairclimb Challenge on Friday (May 14) at the Cochrane Ranche stairs.

CHELSEA KEMP COCHRANE EAGLE



added mayor Jeff Genung participated in the race and "knocked it out of the park" with a time of 32:40 minutes.

No more than two or three firefighters were allowed at the site during the stair climb and they practiced physical distancing and all other health measures recommended by Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health.

Chyka has been running for Wellspring Calgary since the inaugural race seven years ago. Helping raise money for cancer is what keeps him coming back to the exhausting exercise.

"Everyone has been touched by cancer," Chyka said. "Cancer the disease gets most of the attention, support programs like this which are as important for people to survive the disease process don't get

the same sort of spotlight."

He praised the programs offered by Wellspring and the organization's ability to support those with cancer and their families.

"They need this help because a strong state of mind is what gets you through that disease process, along with treatment. You have to have the right frame of mind and so do the family members," Chyka said.

It is a great experience raising money for the charity because of the impact it can have in the community through its support of cancer survivors and their families.

"We love the challenge, but we really love the cause," Chyka said.

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