

Fun is icing on the cake at Skate to Care

This year's event provides \$73,000 for mental health care

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SAINT JOHN • The 28th annual Investors Group Skate to Care lived up to its name on Saturday, raising \$73,000 for mental health programs in the province.

A few dozen groups, decked out in everything from leis to mascot costumes, laced up their skates and hit the ice at the plex.

The event was fun for the whole family, with toddlers and grandparents whizzing by parents, some of whom were happily watching from the stands. Camera flashes and calls of "look over here" were common throughout the skate.

week's worth of fundraising.

Club president Fletcher Ritcey had been to the event in the past but said Skate to Care could become a tradition for the group.

Kari Graham, who skated with the Saint John Regional Hospital oncology department's Cancer Crushers team, said the event is always popular and for a good reason.

"We love coming out to support the cause."

This year was the first time the event has been hosted at the plex.

The event raises money for mental health programs through the Saint John Regional Hospital Foundation. This year's total was added to the foundation's fundraising efforts for the year and immediately following the event, the group donated \$357,000 to mental health care.

More than a handful of groups handed in donations in the thousands. The top team, Papa's Angels, raised \$5,589. The second- and third-place teams each collected \$4,400 for the cause.

A new trophy was handed out at this year's event, going to the corporate team which raised the most money. The Just Us Gang - In Memory of Mark Brown, which was made up of Department of Justice employees and friends, raised \$7,454.

Skate to Care is MindCare's signature event and has raised approximately \$2.6 million in its 28-year history.

Jean-Marc Poirier, chair of the MindCare committee, said mental health is no longer in the shadows.

"Mental health is an important matter that touches everyone in our community. At some point in our lives, every one of us will know someone who's been affected by mental illness or crisis. That's why today is so important."

Foundation president Jeff McAloon said he was thrilled with the turnout and the generosity of those in the Greater Saint John area.

"I think you'd be hard pressed to find someone in the community who doesn't understand the importance of mental health."

McAloon also spoke to the age range of those who turned out to support the foundation.

"Everyone knows that it's such an important cause, and people are willing to put their time and effort into raising money toward that cause."



Skating buddies stick together. The 28th annual Investors Group Skate to Care fundraiser on Saturday brought in \$73,000 for mental health programs in New Brunswick. PHOTO: KELSEY PYE/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



The cause was serious but the methods were fun at the plex on Saturday for the 28th annual Investors Group Skate to Care. The fundraiser, which is in support of mental health initiatives in the province, brought in \$73,000.

PHOTO: KELSEY PYE/TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL



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JEFF MCALOON

In addition to skating, there were also off-ice activities such as a photo booth and a portable arcade out in the parking lot.

School groups also got in on the fun, with students from Barnhill Middle School, Hampton Middle School, Kennebecasis Valley High School, Rothesay High School and Saint John High School participating to raise money for a good cause.

Robert Scott, past president of the Saint John High School Key Club, was pleased to help out while having fun.

"It was a good thing to raise money for and represent the club. It was a great time."

The club stands for leadership, building character and inclusiveness, and Scott said the fundraiser was perfectly aligned with their beliefs.

The group skated with seven members and raised a little over \$500 in a