

MitoCanada sets a new unofficial Guinness World Record title at the Calgary (virtual) Marathon and raises \$73,000 in 6 hours!

CALGARY, AB (Monday, June 1, 2020) — A group of six (6) Calgary-based runners competed for a new (unofficial) Guinness World Record (GWR) for ***‘The most money raised whilst running a marathon distance’*** yesterday on May 31, 2020 as part of the virtual Calgary Marathon Charity Challenge raising funds for the MitoCanada Foundation, a national charity for mitochondrial disease. The run took place on the local Calgary pathways and was considered a virtual run while each runner was careful to practice appropriate physical distancing.

The GWR run was inspired by the courage and energy of local elite runner Blaine Penny, the CEO of MitoCanada who cofounded the charity after his son Evan tragically fell ill in 2008 and was later diagnosed with mitochondrial disease. “MitoCanada is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and we were planning several unique (physical) events including 10 GWR’s to commemorate the milestone at the Calgary Marathon,” says Penny. “After the physical Calgary Marathon was cancelled and went virtual, MitoCanada worked with Guinness to establish a new record title that could be completed virtually.”

Once getting the green light on the record title attempt and with just three weeks to plan the event, Penny quickly put out a call for runners to compete for the record - all running and raising funds for MitoCanada - with the person raising the most funds taking home the new GWR title as the prize. Another unique aspect of the event was creating a live broadcast of the run on YouTube Live and Facebook Live to provide an engaging way for people to follow, learn about mitochondrial disease through interviews with patients, scientists, and physicians, and be inspired to donate.

“These Guinness World Records attempts are an excellent example of how runners aspire to be part of something that is bigger than their individual abilities to accomplish a running time goal,” said Penny who also noted MitoCanada had successfully achieved 12 other GWR’s since 2013. “This teamwork and collective fundraising energy will make a significant boost in helping advance MitoCanada’s mission and raise the profile of mitochondrial disease in Canada and globally.”

In order to achieve the record, Guinness set a minimum fundraising threshold of \$2,000 USD (approximately \$2,800). “We had a close 3-way competition on the fundraising up until about the 30 km mark (of the 42.2 km marathon), and then Graham Sherman blew the doors wide open when three \$4,500 donations came in together catapulting him to the top of the leaderboard. The rest was history and Sherman raised over \$33,000 and is the new unofficial Guinness Work Record holder for ‘The most money raised whilst running a marathon distance’.”

“This has been one of the most humbling experiences of my life! It was an honour to take part, but then to see the community around Calgary, as well as all the people in my life, join together to support this awesome cause while I suffered out there is simply unforgettable. What a day!!”, says Sherman reflecting back on the 6 hours of marathon suffering to become the new Guinness World Records title holder.

“I truly believe our fundraising will improve the lives of people who are suffering from mitochondrial disease, like my son Evan, through earlier diagnosis and interventions, and funding the much-needed research to find a cure”, Penny said.

For more information about the runners, check out their bios on our website at https://mitocanada.org/gwr_runners/

To arrange interviews or for more information, please contact:

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About Mitochondrial Disease: The term mitochondrial disease refers to a large group of disorders, as the result of a genetic mutation, which causes the mitochondria to fail and results in less energy being made in the cells. The cells may stop working or die. Mitochondrial disease tends to affect the body's energy intensive organs, including the brain, muscles, heart, eyes, and digestive system. Parts of the body may not function properly and many health problems can result. The symptoms of mitochondrial disease can range from mild to severe. There is no cure and minimal therapies. However, many people have a normal life span with their disease well managed. Research is underway across the world that will help us learn more about these diseases and find new treatments and therapies.

About MitoCanada: The MitoCanada Foundation charitable organization was formed in 2010 by a group of passionate Canadian parents whose previously happy, healthy children were given a diagnosis of mitochondrial disease. Not willing to be victims of such overwhelming twists of fate, these individuals set out to find solutions that would transform the outlook for their children and to protect others. MitoCanada provides diagnosed individuals, their families and caregivers with the knowledge and support they need to improve quality of life while raising public awareness of the disease and advancing Canadian research activities. We are confident that there is hope for the future for Canadians with mitochondrial disease. For more information, please visit our website at mitocanada.org.

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