For many runners in Toronto, the Sporting Life 10K marks the beginning of the – fingers crossed – snow-free running season. In 2015, runners near Ottawa also have an attractive spring race to look forward to. Sporting Life has expanded its race series beyond the popular Yonge Street route to the scenic Rideau Canal, with both runs taking place on the second Sunday in May.

The Toronto race is one of the city’s most well-known 10Ks (2014’s race entries exceeded 22,000 participants) thanks to its dominion over the city’s main arterial street – and its inclusive ethos. Also, the race has a long-standing relationship with Camp Oochigeas.

Since 2003, the Toronto Sporting Life 10K has raised over $10 million to support the camp, which is affectionately known as Ooch by its campers, volunteers and staff. Ooch creates great experiences for kids with or who are affected by cancer.

Ooch offers camp or camp-like opportunities 365 days a year. Whether canoeing on Lake Rosseau, or meeting a children’s oncology expert at one of the five urban camp facilities, Ooch activities are designed to help children and teens heal, create positive memories, and help them develop a sense of self beyond a diagnosis. Ooch’s empathetic staff are often some of the first people children meet upon learning they have cancer. Ooch offers the only residential camp in Canada with on-site IV chemotherapy blood transfusions. These and other stand-out features help kids who normally stand out, fit in.

“Ooch was started by a group of volunteers and oncologists in 1983 who knew there had to be something more than chemotherapy and radiation,” said executive director Alex Robertson. “Kids can step outside of themselves and become

By Tania Haas

Sporting Life 10K Races: Changing Lives in Two Cities

Now you have two reasons to make a note in your calendar on May 10, 2015: Mother’s Day, and the Sporting Life 10Ks in Ottawa and Toronto.
who they want to be, and not necessarily a patient, and not necessarily a bereaved sibling.”

As a registered charity receiving no government funding, Ooch relies exclusively on generous support of fundraisers, individual and corporate donors and events like the Sporting Life 10k.

**Ottawa’s SL10K supports CHEO**

The Ottawa Sporting Life 10K’s funds are also directed to a children’s health organization: the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario Foundation. With 5,000 bibs to sell and registration at $45, race organizers expect upwards of $100,000 to support the hospital’s pediatric health and research centre.

Like the Toronto race, the Ottawa race has alluring perks including gift cards and high quality race shirts. Also, any race participant who raises $100 gets the race registration fee waived.

The Ottawa Sporting Life 10K takes place just two weeks before the Tamarack Ottawa Race Weekend – offering distance runners a the perfectly-timed tune-up race before their planned marathon or half-marathon.

Race Director Cory Freedman says both races welcome runners of all levels, and encourage families and children to participate and fundraise for a relatable cause.

Tania Haas is a Toronto-based journalist