

Another Tremendous Success:

AWA's 24th Annual Climb and Run For Wilderness

By Sean Nichols, AWA Conservation Specialist



A trumpet fanfare by local musician Chris Morrison and a few words from City of Calgary Councillor Gian-Carlo Carra and Dr. David Swann, candidate for Calgary Mountainview kicked off the 24th annual Climb and Run for Wilderness bright and early on a perfect spring day. The more than 1,200 participants included ten elite athletes from across the world competing in the Tower-running World Cup, babies in backpacks, Calgaryans from all walks of life taking part a fun Saturday family event, as well as dignitaries including Vice-Consul Lee Wilbur from the U.S. Consulate General and long-time climb supporter Richard Guy, who turned 98 this year.

“The 24th climb and run for Wilderness has been without a doubt the most exciting and rewarding Earth Day Celebration we have had the honour to present. Our newest element, the power hour, was an outstanding success and we continue to spread this event's reach around the world,” says AWA Executive Director Christyann Olson. “We could not realize this success without the Calgary Towers amazing staff and the more than 100 volunteers that bring a vibrancy that is Calgary.”

For the past 24 years the Climb and Run for Wilderness has been celebrating Alberta's wild water, wild lands and wildlife. This year 1,000 people ascended the 802 stairs

of the tower, raising awareness and money – \$105,000 and counting – for the conservation of Alberta's wildlife, wild lands, and wild waters. Event supporters *West Direct Courier* and *The Carbon Farmer* have teamed up to plant a thousand trees in northern Alberta, one for every person who reached the top!

This year the AWA and the Calgary Tower were proud to celebrate the addition of an exciting new component to the event – the power hour! This elite event challenged competitors to see how many circuits of the tower (up the stairs and back down) they could complete in one hour. The Climb and Run for Wilderness power hour is the



only event in Canada to be recognized as a Premium Event qualifying for the Tower-running World Cup, the worldwide acknowledged ranking for stair racers. The power hour attracted participants from across Canada, the United States and even Germany. Winners Görg Heimann (the #8 ranked tower runner worldwide) and Veronica Stocker each took home a first prize of \$US 500.

This elite component added an appealing new dimension to an event that is already long-established in Calgary, with the first

Climb for Wilderness having been held on Earth Day in 1992. Since then the day has grown from a simple ascent of the tower to incorporate 5 athletic events including a 1km road race, a family-friendly “fun climb”, a four-hour endurance climb, a *team challenge*, and now the power hour. Teams in the team challenge ranged from corporate teams including teams from Sun-cor, Tetra Tech EBA, and four teams from Cenovus Energy, to family fun-climb teams such as “The Winded Whiners” and “The Young and the Breathless.”

There was also an eco-fair – the *Wild Al-*

berta Expo – plenty of music, games and entertainment, and cultural aspects such as a poetry competition and a mural painting competition that have turned the stairway of the Calgary Tower into the “tallest art gallery in the west” with nature themed murals all the way up the tower’s 802 stairs.

There were also more than more than 30 booths transforming the base of the tower into the wild and imaginative experience that is the Wild Alberta Expo, where everyone young and old was able learn about all the groups working hard to protect Alberta’s wild spaces and wildlife. 🌱

