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Export date: Thu Mar 28 17:55:35 2024 / +0000 GMT

Marking International Women?s Day in Caledon

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International Women's Day was celebrated worldwide on March 8. This is an event growing in recognition with every passing year, as women increasingly raise their voices to express both problems with the everyday inequalities they face and commemorate the achievements we have made. However, as an increasingly progressive global society, there remain fundamental issues hampering socio-economic equality that escape the notice of the more fortunate, or which still carry ridiculous stigma.

The problem of ?period poverty? has only recently come to the fore, with movements at home and abroad slowly bringing attention to this sometimes uncomfortable and overlooked issue. Period poverty, put simply, is the inaccessibility to basic menstrual and feminine hygiene products. Considered a necessity for some, these are a luxury for those who cannot afford them. More broadly, it speaks to a lack of education about the female cycle in general and the still-existent stigma around discussion of what is or will be a monthly reality for over half the world's population.

Trying to change this grassroots issue and promote discussion, is a local organization called It's A Girl Thing. On Saturday March 9th, it held a fundraising event at Stratengers in Bolton. Founder Courtney Yavtucovich, an undergraduate student at the University of Guelph, started the organization (now in the process of becoming a registered charity) in response to what she learned while taking economics classes. ?I learned about wealth distribution and inequality?through school service trips I really realized how fortunate I am to be able to afford these products,? explained Yavtucovich. ?Finding out how women have to choose between affording these products and helping their families really spoke to me.?

We'd like to think that in places like Caledon and Canada something as basic as having access to feminine hygiene products wouldn't be a concern, but for a silent part of the population, whether it be out of shame for expressing a need for something once so taboo, or having that need in the first place, and even voicing the problem is a struggle.

Yavtucovich and her team, including Marketing Coordinator Thomas Wellum, her sister, Ashley, Volunteer Donations Coordinator, and Community Outreach Coordinator Kasia Szymanski, organized their event in conjunction with restaurant managers and sisters Nikki and Angie Vish. When asked what sparked their interest in hosting this event, Nikki Vish said of herself and her sister, who run this branch of the restaurant for their family, ?we're both girls, right, and we have a full woman staff working front to back?every woman faces it.?

For the event, a special cocktail called ?It's a Blackberry Thing? was available, with fifty percent of the proceeds being donated towards purchasing feminine hygiene products for It's a Girl Thing. For entry, guests were asked to donate an unopened box of product, and in exchange were treated to a night of live music, good company, and free appetizers. The event was certainly a success, with Stratengers becoming packed by 9 pm with both party guests and regulars.

It's a Girl Thing began with small, intimate events held in Yavtucovich's house. However, when asked about the organization's future plans, all three organizers expressed their hopes to expand their efforts by hopefully partnering with Fem International and becoming a charitable organization by the end of the year, with more public events to come.

?Our vision is trying to empower women and fight wealth inequality,? said Yavtucovich. ?It's A Girl Thing strives to empower women. We understand that it's difficult for women to succeed when they have a lack of access to proper hygiene products. We want to give women the assurance of a healthy, clean, and stress-free period, enabling them to succeed.?

When asked why he became involved with the project, marketing manager Wellum answered, ?It's something I was initially not aware of [period poverty], being a guy. The statistics are staggering?I was just inspired by Ashley's ambition to inspire other people.?

To donate or become involved with It's A Girl Thing, please visit their website at www. itsagirlthingmovement.com, or visit their Facebook page or Instagram account. To make a financial contribution to the organization, please visit their GoFundMe page at Gofundme/itsagirlthingmovement.