

Volunteers ready to help community take holiday ?Victory Lap?

By Rob Paul

With the holiday season in full swing, and Christmas just a month away, people are beginning to put up their lights and set up their trees in preparation to get in the spirit. It's not always easy to come across a Christmas specific store, but shoppers in Caledon Village and the surrounding area are in luck this year.

Victory Lap Emporium?located at 18420 Hurontario Street?has opened a Christmas section in its store as part of its efforts to raise funds for Victory House with plenty of Christmas decor and decorations being donated by residents across Caledon.

Victory House Association of Dufferin Caledon (VH) was a vision that Patricia Valliere was given almost six years ago. After forming a Board of Directors and with legal support from Carter's law firm, the charity was established, and charitable status was given.

?VH is a transition home for women and their children in times of crisis, who are ready to transition to healthy community living through the support of the VH team,? said Valliere. ?There will be individual programs for each woman that will be designed together with a professional counsellor and coaches. We have coaches from many areas, such as financial, housing, legal, child-care, resume building and/or further education that may be needed. It's whatever the ladies would need is what we will be setting up. When they first meet with the professional counsellor, she would decide which coaches the ladies need to meet with throughout the week.?

Victory Lap thrift store is managed and operated by volunteers. All the proceeds from the store after the rent, go to support Victory House transitional home. Some volunteers have been supporting VH from the beginning and others have joined the team as time has gone by.

?We always need more volunteers,? Valliere said. ?The hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday and we try to have the volunteers only work three to four hours each. Our volunteers are the power behind the thrift store.?

Just about a year ago, VH opened the Victory Lap store to help with fundraising for the program, but it's been open on and off due to COVID-19. Now with restrictions being eased, the team at VH found the perfect opportunity to expand.

?When the COVID pandemic hit all of us over the last couple of years, fundraising became almost impossible. The plan to eventually open a thrift store to support the charity was moved forward and the Victory Lap Emporium was opened. Most of the residents in the area know the store as a couple of years ago a truck ran through the front of the store, which allowed the store to be totally renovated and it's like brand new inside. It was the perfect spot right off the bat and it filled up with donations within a week or two. But no sooner than we were open, we were closed again and that happened throughout the year.

?In November, we celebrated our first-year anniversary for the thrift store and when a smaller store beside the shop became available, the decision to make it a part of the Victory House group was made. It came available about a month ago and we talked about it and realized we couldn't afford to not do it. We had about eight to ten bins full of Christmas donations from last year and so the little shop was made into a ?Christmas Shop' until the end of December, at which time we will redo the space with more like new and antique house items. We're quite happy with it and it's been popular.?

Christmas Snow Flakes made by the Teen Action Group of Brampton Christian High School will be sold in the shop as a means for people to share the support and show their love for the women residing in the Victory House/Bridge House.

Not only has the store become a way for people to support VH, but it's also become a hot spot for thrifting and now it fills the need of a Christmas store in the area, all in the name of making a difference in the community.

?You may just find that item you have been looking for to dress up your home or give as a precious gift in the only all Christmas stop in our area,? said Valliere. ?There are mini table Christmas trees and large fully-decorated floor trees. The shelves of the mini shop are filled with lights, candles, old and antique Christmas decorations. As we get closer to Christmas, poinsettias and table centrepieces will be available to purchase at amazing low prices.

?The original store is filled with new women's clothing, shoes and boots. Some of the items are brand new with the original tags and pricing on them. Coats and jackets are for sale for \$10 to \$20 and under. The items for sale are chosen with much care by the volunteers and priced accordingly.?

The plan is to officially open Victory House sometime in the next three months with everything being finalized, but after over half-a-decade Valliere and her volunteers' goals are coming to fruition.

?The Victory House/Bridge House is the first phase of the Victory House legacy. The apartment in the lower level of the existing house on the property had to be completely renovated from the plumbing, septic, wiring, lighting, and a new kitchen. All of the work that has been completed has come from volunteers and community business. The Palgrave Rotary donated the money to completely outfit the kitchen with members also donating the dining table and chairs.

?The remainder of the furniture in the apartment was all donated by local residents. Several members of the Victory House team volunteered their time and money to outfit the two bedrooms. The rooms are very inviting and cozy, with nothing missing, including desks and lamps, comforters and pictures. Many of the VH volunteer team were a part of finishing the apartment, as they gave their time to paint and decorate to make this living space the best in the area for women in need. The apartment is now completely renovated and amazing.?

Now that they're approaching the official opening of Victory House, Valliere says they're focused on the next goal of opening another house in order to take in more women, something that has become an even larger need with the circumstances of the pandemic.

?The next step is to start the renovations of the large building on the same site to house four to six women and their children in times of need,? she said. ?The pandemic has made this need in our area even larger than it was before COVID. Please be a part of making a new life for the women and children who come to Victory House. We are now in great need of donations to support the ladies that will come to reside in the VH apartment. One time and monthly donations can be made online at the Victory House website or can be mailed to PO Box 164, Caledon ON L7C 3L9. As caring members of our community and those who are just passing through, the little shop has become a means to reach out and know that someone is being cared for by your support. Tax Receipts are issued for donations of \$25.00 or more.?

For more information about Victory House or to donate, visit www.thevictoryhouse.ca/.