

A fortunate solution

EDITORIAL

All those involved in Victory House should receive recognition for their efforts.

From board members, volunteers and contributors, the team has embarked on a mission to help women and children in times of crisis.

Their campaign reminded me about the time when I covered the development of the North East Outreach Centre (NEOSS) in Melfort, Sask. Just like Victory House, it too was a shelter for women and children in Saskatchewan.

NEOSS had its fair share of ups and downs. They had a shelter that burnt down quite tragically and they had to raise funds to open it up again holding them back a number of years. The grand opening, which featured dignitaries and a multitude of guests, was a truly remarkable experience.

That shelter was needed for a community that was based in the north east portion of Saskatchewan, almost hidden deep in the rural and remote areas of the province. Saskatchewan unfortunately has a staggering problem where it had the highest rate of police reported family violence with 498 victims per 100,000 people, according to Statistics Canada.

The story of Victory House is similar yet different at the same time. The idea of Victory House was created after its founder was passionate about helping the community. Unlike NEOSS, Victory House will be based in the Caledon area, residing near urban centres such as Brampton, Mississauga and Orangeville.

Even though Caledon is surrounded by huge cities, the nearby shelter, Family Transition House is at its capacity and cannot accept new clients. This is problematic because domestic violence is a concerning problem in every community. Yes, Ontario has the lowest rates of police reported domestic violence with 148 victims per 1000,000, but we don't know what happens behind closed doors. We don't know what happens to our neighbours when they go home in the midst of an abusive situation. A women's shelter should be stationed in every town and city. Whether it's 498 or 148 victims, the number needs to reach zero. There shouldn't be any victims of any kind of physical, verbal or sexual abuse anywhere but unfortunately it continues and places like Victory House and NEOSS are needed.

The Dufferin and Caledon area sees on average, 100 women and 50 children in emergency shelters each year, with 30 per cent of these admissions as return visits, according to Statistics Canada. This statistic, and the aforementioned ones above, just emphasizes the troubling truths of an emergency crisis situation. This makes hearing a group of warm-hearted individuals wanting to make a change and contribute their time simply awe inspiring.

Like NEOSS, Victory House is spearheaded by their volunteers. Over the last three years, 50 volunteers from Compass Community Church banded together to try and create this shelter for the community of Caledon. They contribute their time and energy trying to help bring this idea to fruition, time that could be spent with their own family, friends and loved ones. We all want to live in a strong and viable town. These volunteers coming together are truly the epitome of community service.

An interesting feat that Victory House offers is support and training for vulnerable people to get back to their lives. They offer counseling, healing, support and help them in areas of budgeting, child care, finding a job and finding a house in a timely manner that suits them. Victory House could have easily just provided them food, shelter and clothes but instead they went beyond the essential needs to try and help these women and children return to a prosperous life.

Nobody wants to use an emergency crisis shelter. It's however wonderful that one is being built in this community. It shows where our hearts are truly at.