

Accessible Trick or Treating Returns to Sir Lancelot

By Riley Murphy

Sir Lancelot Court in Bolton will be returning this year with their street-wide accessible trick-or-treating event, the fifth year in a row, as part of the Treat Accessibly initiative.

These residents will be handing out candy at the bottom of their driveways, ensuring those with disabilities can participate in the Halloween fun.

Treat Accessibly works to ensure that Halloween is inclusive and accessible for all children across Canada.

Founded by the Padulo family in 2017, the family worked to change their trick-or-treating when they realized someone in their neighbourhood could not participate because they were a wheelchair user, and most of the homes had stairs.

This initiative has grown across Canada with over 100,000 homes supporting accessible trick-or-treating.

Those involved in the initiative let their neighbours know with their bright orange Treat Accessibly lawn sign displayed on the front lawn.

John Groe, Vice Chair of the Accessibility Advisory Committee at the Town of Caledon, has a daughter with a disability and owns two companies that support individuals with disabilities.

He and his neighbours helped to bring this initiative to Sir Lancelot Court in Bolton.

"I've always struggled with what could help me educate people and make accessibility fun, this was the lightning bolt," he says after being introduced to Rich Padulo, co-founder of Treat Accessibly, over five years ago.

One of the essential things for Groe was that the accessible trick-or-treating remained on Halloween day.

"If it's not on Halloween, I won't do it, because you're still segregating the kids, I want this fully integrated," he says. "I want it on Halloween and I want everybody together."

Groe's vision is for accessible trick-or-treating to be available in all areas of Caledon, not just their neighbourhood.

Each year, the street is shut down, and Caledon OPP, Caledon Fire and a large balloon arch greet each trick-or-treater as they come through.

Coffee Time has donated coffee and hot chocolate for the event, and Mars Canada, as well as Hershey, will be donating candy.

Groe says that the event has snowballed over the years, with more and more wanting to participate.

This year, they are expecting 400 to 500 people, and he says the entire neighbourhood is extremely invested and excited for the big day.

"It's not about money, it's not about giving something that has a dollar value, but giving an experience where we can give people the sense that they belong. It's huge, it's an amazing, amazing, amazing feeling," says Groe.

He shared that he spends most of his time at the event walking around and watching all the families enjoying themselves.

He adds that, from a dad's perspective, being able to help create a space where his daughter needn't worry and be in a closed environment is vital to him.

Regional Councillor Mario Russo has been part of the street-wide accessible trick-or-treating event for years, and he says it demonstrates the ability and power that a few can achieve when they put their heart and effort into it.

"John and several other community members were the brainchild that brought this initiative to Bolton, particularly Sir Lancelot, but how quickly the whole community bought in," says Russo.

He says that the Town can help by assisting with administration and road closures, alongside other local businesses stepping up, but he adds, "this only happens because of John and the Sir Lancelot neighbourhood."

Russo says that when each neighbour brings their candy and treats to the edge of their driveway, the street and ambiance are "electric and so alive."

The sense of community is unbelievable at the event, he says, and he gets to watch and experience the "indifference to accessibility," which he explains is "equality and a sense of not being different, everyone on the sidewalk and street, no barriers, just kids, parents, grandparents all experiencing the same joy."

"As John says not more, not different but equal and same experience," says Russo.

"I love it so much, it is a privilege to play a small role in supporting and contributing to this event. However, it's all about community and it's all about everyone experiencing the same thing, the same fun and the same joy!" he says.

The event will run from 6 pm to 9 pm at Sir Lancelot Court in Bolton, and if attendees are able, they are asked to bring a non-perishable donation to support the Exchange food bank, run by Caledon Community Services.