

Annual Ferguson Walk raises funds to support Family Transition Place

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

About 150 people turned out to walk the trails at the Island Lake Conservation Area last Sunday, September 22, in support of the Ferguson Memorial Walk.

The annual walk raises funds for Family Transition Place in Orangeville.

The message of why the Walk takes place is very simple.

“In remembrance of Heidi's life, the Ferguson Memorial Walk was created to raise awareness and prevent future violence against women.”

Heidi was murdered 10 years ago by her estranged husband in a case of domestic violence. The murder and the husband's subsequent suicide shocked the Town of Orangeville.

Organizers raise funds to support helping women and families in crisis and also supports education youth in schools about domestic violence.

“We were shocked when it happened, he had never been abusive,” explained Heidi's mom Penny Bogner when speaking of her daughter's death and the Walk's connection to Family Transition Place. “That's why she thought ‘he would never hurt me.’ She called me and said ‘I'm terrified.’ I said ‘do what ever you have to do to be safe. She was afraid it would make it worse if he was charged.”

Penny and her husband Gus connected with Family Transition Place in hopes of preventing future tragedies of this nature.

“We like the idea they also do education in the schools and what you should expect in a respectful relationship. That's what we really liked about the program.”

Based in Orangeville, Family Transition Place provides services to Orangeville and across Dufferin County and Caledon.

“We are a shelter and counselling agency to support women and their children who are leaving abusive relationships or are in abusive relationships and need support or just need support in their journey to a healthy relationship,” explained Family Transition Place executive director Norah Kennedy. “Unfortunately one of our biggest challenges is that we are full all the time. One of the problems is women are staying in the shelter longer because there's no where else for them to go because there's such a housing crisis in our community. If we don't have a room or a bed for them we work to find another place for them to go where they will be safe. We would never turn someone away.”

Family Transition Place has been operating for 35 years in Orangeville.

The Shelter is housed in a secure building.

“We have very good security and a

really amazing relationship with our police services in town,” Ms. Kennedy explained. “If we call them they know they need to be there right away. We want women to be able to find us if they need us. We want them to find us and we put all those other precautions into place.”

Funds raised for the shelter also help provide a youth education program in the schools for students grade five and up.

According to Ms. Kennedy, statistics show that one in four women will be the victim of some type of domestic abuse in their lifetime.