

Bolton United to focus on elder abuse in its next 'Let's Talk' seminar

By Rob Paul

This Friday, Bolton United Church will continue its 'Let's Talk' series with a discussion focused on elder abuse.

The free Zoom discussion will begin at 6:30 p.m.

For the event, Bolton United is bringing in guest speaker Mary Shkoury. Shkoury has been working in Health and Wellness sectors for the last 15 years with a focus on seniors' health and safety.

Having graduated from York University with a Specialized Honors BA in Sociology, Shkoury completed her studies in gerontology through Queens University.

Her passion and commitment to caring for Canadian seniors' rights has led her to her role with Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario (EAPO), where her mission is to see the province continue to be a safe place for our seniors to live, be heard and be free from Elder Abuse.

EAPO is a provincial charitable, non-profit organization focused on supporting the implementation of the Ontario Strategy to Combat Elder Abuse and has been doing so since 2002.

The framework of the strategy focuses on service coordination, building local capacity of front-line workers, caregivers, and community networks, by providing public education and training of professionals/service providers and families of seniors, to raise awareness around elder abuse issues.

Shkoury's credentials and association with EAPO made her an obvious choice for Bolton United to reach out to for the elder abuse discussion.

'Mary is from Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario, a respected organization which has been educating Ontarians on the topic for many years,' said Sandra Hautot of Bolton United. 'We're grateful that Mary Shkoury is able to join us and share her vast knowledge in this area.'

According to EAPO, elder abuse is not just physical and can show in other forms of abuse including psychological, financial, sexual, and neglect. Approximately eight to 10 per cent of senior experience some form of elder abuse in Canada each year.

What landed Bolton United on the topic of elder abuse was the church's commitment to the senior population in Caledon and the importance of educating the community on the impact of elder abuse.

'We have four topics of focus for our seminar series. Seniors, health, the environment, and social justice,' Hautot said. 'This was a topic which we felt was important to seniors. We're hoping to generate awareness in our community of what constitutes elder abuse, how to prevent it and what to do if you witness it.'

Although Bolton United's 'Let's Talk' seminars have lost some of the social aspect that allowed the congregation and community to connect, the move to virtual as a result of the pandemic has also allowed the discussions to reach people all over the country—including guest speakers who may otherwise not be available to come in person.

'Let's Talk' seminars have been going on since 2018 and when we held them in person, we used to provide a free dinner,' said Hautot. 'We have had interest from our Bolton United congregation, the Bolton community, and from individuals from the surrounding local communities of Palgrave, Caledon East, King City, and as far away as Montreal, Vancouver, Halifax and many

other places where Zoom has allowed people to dial in from.?

To access the Zoom link for the ?Let's Talk? seminar, visit www.boltonunitedchurch.net/. For more information, call 905-857-2615 or email office@boltonunitedchurch.com.