

Caledon Meals on Wheels to hold tasting menu event

By **Riley Murphy**

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Caledon Meals on Wheels (CMOW) is inviting community members and their appetites to their tasting menu event on March 12.

Attendees will be able to not only meet CMOW's brand-new Chef Arielle, but also try new menu ideas and vote on the dishes they'd like to see added to the menu.

"[We] wanted to make sure that what we're doing is coming from and informed by the people that we're serving," says Executive Director Kim Rodrigues, "I think it's important that they have that input as much as possible and be able to contribute to our programs as well."

Rodrigues says they aim to keep CMOW client-centred, and their feedback is key to the work they do.

She adds they're excited for Chef Arielle to join CMOW, bringing both her new ideas and experience to the table.

"It would be really great to be able to showcase some of the ideas that she has, and some of the new flavors that she wants to bring. We really want to get away from people thinking that Meals on Wheels meals aren't really that great. They're delicious. They're meals that I would bring home to my family," says Rodrigues.

This event, she says, is a chance for the community to experience that for themselves.

"We're one of a handful of organizations that do a Meals on Wheels program that actually cook their meals from scratch themselves. We're really proud of that," says Rodrigues. "It means that we can really provide high-quality meals that are delicious and meet the needs of the seniors and older adults that might need those meals."

The event is a two-for-one, Rodrigues adds, offering both a chance for the community to meet their new chef and develop their new menu, but also a chance to celebrate their newest project thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF).

At the tasting menu event, there will be a celebration of the launch of their new podcast, Aging Out Loud Caledon, which they completed with support from their OTF grant.

The podcast focuses on the lives and stories of local older adults in the community, each with a unique story to share.

Rodrigues says they feel fortunate to be working in the community with seniors and older adults who often provide interesting insight and anecdotes of their lives.

"We often are feeling that we're hearing all of this, and wouldn't it be great for other people to hear?" she says. "We felt for a long time that we were gatekeeping some of those stories, and sharing the amazing lives that so many of our seniors have as well as what they've experienced."

Rodrigues says they wanted to be able to share that more broadly than just their own team and organization, "because truly there's so much that we learn ourselves, as staff members or volunteers, from the people that we're engaging with, and [we] thought it would be a great opportunity for others."

"Sometimes we don't pause enough, and listen, and learn from people that have walked this path before us. They have a lot to

share,? she adds.

So far, they have more than 35 people registered, and Rodrigues says they're excited to welcome more.

The free event will run from 10 a.m. to 12 noon on March 12 at St. James Anglican Church in Caledon East.

RSVP must be done before the event so CMOW can ensure there is enough food for all.

?We're happy to accommodate as many as we can. We'd love to meet people that haven't experienced a meal through us or who are currently getting meals through us. We'd love to see them at the event and get their feedback, what they like, what they perhaps don't like, and help us celebrate some of the projects that we've been able to develop most recently through that OTF grant.?