

Community demand outpacing capacity in Caledon

Caledon Community Services celebrating success and looking ahead to future challenges

By Zachary Roman

Demand for food support in Caledon is increasing.

Caledon Community Services (CCS) recently published its annual impact report for 2022 to 2023, which details various statistics about the non-profit's work in the community.?

There were 2,592 visits to CCS' food pantry in the past year, which CCS reports is a 29 per cent increase from the year prior. A total of over 160,000 pounds of food, personal care and household items were distributed to Caledon residents in need.?

Nearly 1,000 Caledon residents, around half of them children, received basic needs support, healthy meals, and ?information and access to vital services? from CCS in the past year according to its report.?

CCS also provides settlement assistance, and 213 newcomers to Town accessed that service last year. There were also 139 people who took English language classes from CCS.

CCS' employment programs saw 548 people assisted and resulted in 156 job starts, a 200 per cent increase from 2021 to 2022. There were 45 local businesses that received assistance with their workforce needs and 47 youth who went to CCS for job training and experience.?

Also highlighted in the report was the nearly 21,000 rides provided by CCS in the past year, and the 356 seniors' health and wellness sessions it delivered.

Mariia Kupriianova, Chief Development Officer for CCS, said over the past year it was the kindness and generosity of Caledon residents and businesses that made a difference in the community. She said CCS' recent Annual General Meeting (AGM), held on June 28, was about business but also about celebrating the successes of the past year and looking ahead to meet the challenges to come.

?Demand unfortunately outpaces our capabilities?? said Kupriianova. ?There are many challenges that lie ahead? we're now serving the highest-ever number of Caledon residents with food support, that's what we're up against.?

Kupriianova said Caledon is a fast-growing municipality and that CCS is seeing people come in for support that never thought they would need it before.?

At the AGM, several honorary life member awards were given out to supporters of CCS: one to Piero Carbone, long-time owner of Garden Foods; one to Bob Fines, owner of Fines Ford Lincoln; and one to Johanna Chevalier, former Caledon Councillor.??

The AGM was held at the Southfields Community Centre, where CCS has its newcomer support office. No new members joined the CCS board of directors at the AGM.?

Donna Cragg, Director of Communications for CCS, said the non-profit is looking for new board members to help out.

?We're looking to diversify the board so we can connect with different lived experiences around Caledon,? said Cragg.?

CCS is in the last year of its current strategic plan and is already beginning the process of creating its new one. Cragg said this will

involve connecting with the Caledon community on a large scale. Cragg noted CCS CEO Geraldine Aguiar has already met with nearly every social service agency CEO in Caledon already, with community group meetings to come.