

CCS to host milestone 25th annual Home for the Holidays gala]

By Zachary Roman

An upcoming night of food, friends, fun and fundraising in Caledon East will support the Caledon community year-round.

Caledon Community Services (CCS) is hosting its annual Home for the Holidays Gala on December 2 at the Royal Ambassador Event Centre.

It's the 25th anniversary of the event, which started out being held in CCS volunteers' homes ? hence the event's name ? until it became too big and needed to be held at event centres.

Proceeds from the event will support the many programs, services and activities that CCS offers, such as feeding the hungry, ensuring seniors' independence, helping people find employment, providing transportation, and helping children.

CCS Director of Communications and Marketing Donna Cragg said 2016 was the year in which Home for the Holidays became a full-blown upscale gala, a suggestion from then-Regional Councillor and CCS board member Johanna Downey.

Former Caledon Mayor Allan Thompson's wife, Anne, chaired the gala committee for the first two years after the change, and Cragg said the new format was a runaway success.

Downey, alongside Stephen Julian, are the 2022 gala's honorary co-chairs.

The 2022 Home for the Holidays Gala will be the first to be held in person since 2019, as the 2020 and 2021 events were moved to a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

?It's proving to be a very exciting year,? said Cragg, noting that maybe 10 tickets at most were available as of November 21 for the almost-sold out event. ?We're trending towards the highest attendance in the history of the gala. It's got live auctions, silent auctions, a deluxe antipasto bar, lovely meals, it should be really lovely.?

Frances Fripp, one of Canada's only benefit auctioneer specialists, will be the auctioneer at the gala. She has many ties to the Caledon community, as she grew up in Caledon East and was a student at Macville Public School. Fripp graduated from the Canadian Auction College in 2008 and cut her teeth working at Bolton's Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers. Since then, she's assisted foundations and organizations across Canada in raising millions of dollars in funds.

Cragg said it's phenomenal the way ticket sales have gone, and she thinks people are really excited to get back to events like the gala after two years of being stuck inside due to the pandemic.

The title sponsor for this year's gala is Tribal Partners Inc., a large real estate developer. Cragg wanted to express CCS' thanks to the company and all others who sponsored this year's gala. Cragg said without volunteer gala committee members, and sponsors, the gala could not be the continuing success it is each year.