

Community Living Dufferin holds inaugural fundraiser, featuring Campfire Poets

By **Joshua Drakes**

Community Living Dufferin (CLD) held an inaugural fundraiser over the weekend, bringing together residents, local businesses, and volunteers to support people with developmental disabilities in the community.

On Saturday, Oct. 4, the CLD building in East Garafraxa came alive with music, games, food, and art as people from all walks of life gathered to take part in the "Community for Community Living Fundraiser."

CLD executive director Diane Kite said the day was a major success for fundraising.

"We did very well, we raised approximately \$2,800 on the sale of our baked goods from our shop and the food that was served," she said. "While we're still in the throes of doing our silent auction, and there's still donations coming, I think we're going to raise approximately \$10,000 from our fundraiser."

The event featured activities for people from all walks of life. Kids could enjoy a game room with board games and a face-painting station, while adults were able to browse local art and baked goods, with every dollar going back into CLD. Live music by The Campfire Poets filled the courtyard throughout the afternoon.

Local politicians also attended to show support, including Deputy Premier and MPP for Dufferin Caledon Sylvia Jones, who praised CLD's ongoing community impact.

"Community Living Dufferin has done an incredible job leveraging partnerships, working together with organizations that already are thriving in Dufferin County, and making sure that opportunities are available for everyone in the community," Jones said. "To the 150-plus individuals who call Community Living Dufferin home, I hope that you continue to find enrichment, opportunities, employment working with CLD, and I know that our community is behind you."

Following Jones' remarks, Michael Parsa, Ontario's Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, addressed the crowd, thanking Kite and her team.

"Diane, I really want to thank you for your leadership, and I want to thank the entire team here," he said. "It's partnership, it's collaboration, it's all of us coming together to improve the lives of every single person that lives in our communities. I can tell you what the work that we're doing as a government is, but all of that takes a backseat to the work that you do on the ground."

Parsa added that the provincial government remains committed to serving everyone in the province.

"We're working together to make sure that supports and services are flexible, that they can adapt over an individual's lifetime. That's our goal and our vision - that no one in our province is left behind. That's a commitment that we've made as a government," said Parsa.

After the speeches concluded, Kite spoke about how the event represented the collaboration and community spirit that keep Dufferin County, and CLD, going strong.

Kite said the fundraiser would not have been possible without the support of local sponsors and partners, who have a long history of cooperation with CLD.

"Our sponsors were local businesses throughout Dufferin County, and of course the local food bank that we also raised funds for, they donate food back to CLD as well to help support our people," she said. "The one thing I can say about Dufferin County is that

the organizations are so incredibly collaborative and open to helping one another.?

?It's a fantastic area to be a part of, and just the leadership across Dufferin County is absolutely incredible.?

Despite the strong community support, Kite said one persistent challenge remains ? adequate funding.

?Funding is always, certainly a big challenge, the developmental service sector is an underfunded sector, and there needs to be more funding to sustain what we currently have,? she said. ?In order for us to grow and meet the growing need for the individuals who currently are not accessing our services, funding is absolutely the number one challenge that we have.?

Even so, Kite said the CLD team continues to meet challenges head-on, crediting their dedication and passion for making a difference. She encouraged anyone interested in volunteering to reach out.

?There is exceptional work being done every single day for the men and women with intellectual disabilities that we support across Dufferin County,? she said. ?Any support is welcome, is needed, and CLD will continue to provide the highest quality of care. I'm exceptionally proud of the work that we do, the incredible employees that we have at CLD, and that it is because of the incredible men and women that we support, who inspire us every single day to do the work that we do. They are our motivation.?

With their first annual fundraiser finding success, CLD plans to continue the event next year ? and for hopefully many more to come ? to build a stronger, more inclusive community.

For more information about CLD's services, visit communitylivingdufferin.ca. To participate in CLD's ongoing silent auction, visit the Community Living Dufferin Facebook page.