

Community thanked for helping TD support SickKids



Mayor Allan Thompson and Councillor Annette Groves joined TD branch managers Lidia Sportello and Marisa Kennedy for the presentation this cheque for \$591,790.68 to The SickKids Foundation. Accepting it were three people who have benefitted from the facility; Jakob Gatt, Melissa Vella and Meaghan Zarembo. Photo by Bill Rea



Tommy Turner, director of corporate partnerships with the Children's Miracle Network assured people at last week's event the funds raised make a difference.



Marisa Kennedy, manager of the TD branch in Bolton expressed appreciation for the support they have received from the community. Photo by Bill Rea

By Bill Rea

It's well known that TD Bank is a big supporter of the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, and the Bolton branch has been a top contributor over the years.

The local branch is still making a major contribution, although it's not leading the way in the area any more. They were topped in June by the branch at Dixie and Orenda Roads in Brampton. But it looks like the people there were inspired by the example in Bolton.

Lidia Sportello, manager at the Dixie and Orenda branch, said they raised about \$36,000 this year. Bolton branch Manager Marisa Kennedy said the local total this year was almost \$30,000.

"She's been my inspiration," Sportello said of Kennedy.

Seanna Millar, vice-president of corporate partnerships with the SickKids Foundation, presented a plaque to Sportello, acknowledging the achievement. "It's truly amazing what TD's been able to do," she remarked.

Last Wednesday was a time for celebrating a successful fundraising effort, which saw more than \$591,000 raised by TD branches in Peel Region.

Those on hand got to hear from some of the young people who have benefitted from the good work at SickKids. East York resident Melissa Vella, 12, is a SickKids patient ambassador, who used to play a lot of sports until Oct. 22, 2014, when she was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. She said she's now in the last stage of treatments, which has included about 20 lumbar punctures, 60 injections and hundreds of chemotherapy pills.

She also said she has spent a lot of time on the Oncology floor at SickKids, and has also met a lot of youngsters with a variety of different illnesses.

"Because of people like you, we have one of the best hospitals in the world," she told those in attendance. "Your fundraising helps make the hospital the special place that it is."

Palgrave resident Jakob Gatt was on hand with his mother Jacquie. When Jakob was four and a half, he was diagnosed with same illness as Melissa. Now almost 11, Jakob has been cancer free for three years.

Another SickKids alumnus who was there was Meaghan Zarembo. She is the local resident who received serious brain injuries in a horrific automobile accident about 30 years ago. She has since founded the Meaghan Zarembo Music Room for Disabled Individuals, and was one of the official local torchbearers for last year's PanAm Games.

The Bolton branch has been involved in the effort for six years, and the fundraising totals from the branch have passed the \$150,000 mark.

Andres Masmela, district vice-president of TD Bank, said the main campaign ran throughout June, with events like barbecues and bake sales being held at the various branches.

"We do grass-roots events," he said.

Kennedy some senior members of the community who are customers at the branch ran the barbecue there.

"Today is really about celebrating another milestone," Kennedy told those attending last week's event. "We are very committed to the community that we serve."

She recalled getting a call a couple of years ago from a representative of the Children's Miracle Network.

"We came together to help children," she said.

Kennedy lamented a bit that they were not the top fundraising branch this year, but their grand total over six years is still unbeaten.

"Thank you so much to all of you, and so many more," he said. "This community is truly top notch."

"What a wonderful program to support," remarked Mayor Allan Thompson, who was joined by Councillor Annette Groves at the celebration. He thanked the community and TD for helping to make miracles a reality.

"Without SickKids, there are a lot of families that wouldn't be complete today," he said.

Tommy Turner, director of corporate partnerships with the Children's Miracle Network (of which SickKids is a member), said she was happy to be on hand for the celebration.

"These funds make a huge difference," she declared. "I just want to thank everybody in the community of Bolton."

"We care about our community, and we care because it is the right thing to do," Masmela commented.

He also offered thanks to all those involved in the effort, including the branch customers.

"It's because of you we can accomplish these milestones," he said.

"This is a community effort," he added. "Thanks so much for helping us make a difference in the community."

Kennedy observed many customers have grown used to the annual fundraising effort, and continually ask about the progress.

Toward the end, many people stepped up and opened their hearts and wallets (some more than once), and even volunteered their time.