

Fall for Caledon Meals on Wheels allows organization to 'Never Say No' to seniors in need

By Riley Murphy

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Following its inaugural event in 2024, Caledon Meals on Wheels (CMOW) recently hosted their Fall for Caledon Meals on Wheels event at TPC Toronto at Osprey Valley, a sponsor of the event.

The night was complete with dinner and dancing, with music from The Windjammers, and a passion for raising money for a good cause.

Although it was Game Seven for the Blue Jays, Kim Rodrigues, Executive Director, says that more 100 people attended that night.

'Unfortunately, it wasn't a win for the Jays. It was a win for us though that night,' says Rodrigues.

The event raised \$17,500 for CMOW, approximately twice what they raised at their inaugural event.

Rodrigues says that seeing the event grow from its inaugural year to this year's event was a 'big deal' for their fundraising goals.

Operating as a non-profit team, she says these fundraisers mean not only a tremendous amount, but also the opportunity to see everybody come together.

They have six full-time employees, seven part-time employees, and over 120 volunteers,' she adds.

'It's a lot of work, but seeing everybody there, seeing the people that actually support us and appreciate the work that we do and are celebrating,' she says. 'It was also, I would say, a celebration of the work and those that we support.'

'It's wonderful that we raised that money - that means a great deal to us. But I think also having people show up, it's telling us, 'you're doing a good job, continue to do the good work you're doing.' That means, I would say, just as much for us too.'

Funds raised will stay locally in the community, supporting vital programs for residents of Dufferin and Caledon.

Rodrigues explains that although CMOW is partially funded, they still need to raise \$200,000 a year to keep their doors open and their programs free or at low cost, making these fundraising events extremely important.

'We do rely heavily on the kindness of our community and their support to help us serve our seniors,' she says.

She explains that this money will go toward various areas of their organization, including their subsidy program, which partially or fully subsidizes meals for seniors.

'We have a strong perspective in that we will not turn anyone away,' says Rodrigues.

Their homemade meals begin at a subsidized rate of \$8 and include delivery and check-ins with one of the CMOW volunteers.

Rodrigues notes that the \$8 amount is still sometimes too high for some in the community.

'Regardless of what they can afford, we will make sure that they are fed, and also that they have a check in,' she says.

She adds that check-ins are an essential part of what CMOW adds with their meal delivery service.

“For some of our seniors who are more isolated, it's the only person they may see, certainly that day or a couple times a week,” says Rodrigues. “It provides for loved ones the reassurance that somebody is checking in on their parents or their grandparents. Not everybody lives locally with their grandparents or their parents, and so we are able to provide that check in and make sure that they're doing okay, and getting them their meals.”

Another area the funding will go towards is their senior wellness program, which sees more than 250 seniors a week, making it their largest program.

It provides seniors and older adults with a space to remain active, operating in different communities across Caledon, Dufferin, and surrounding areas.

This program includes items such as social time, speakers, trivia, bingo, and much more.

CMOW has another fundraising opportunity approaching soon that will run through December.

Their annual “Match our Meals” campaign kicks off December 1, where the Stafford Group, owners of several local Tim Hortons, will be matching every donation CMOW receives up to \$7,500.

Rodrigues adds that this campaign helps funds go much further.

Their goal for this December is to reach \$20,000, which will go towards their subsidy program and help to cover the costs of fresh fruits and vegetables.

“We're really proud of the food that we provide,” says Rodrigues. “It's meals that I would eat and bring home to my family without question. We want to make sure that people enjoy our food, but also get their nutritional needs met.”

She adds that they also provide gluten-free meals or meals cut, chopped, or pureed, addressing the needs of every individual.

Donations can be made through their Canada Helps page, on their website, by phone, or in person at their office.

Rodrigues adds that for those unable to give this year, they are also looking for people to donate their time.

They are also running various initiatives, including their podcast, Aging Out Loud Caledon, which they are actively seeking to interview seniors to share “their stories, their wisdom, their jokes, whatever they like.”

Lastly, they are also looking for volunteers for their Family Visiting Programs, who can work one-on-one with seniors once a week to meet for coffee and chats.

If any seniors are also interested in that program, CMOW would love to hear from them.