

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Local service programs help many in the community



Local service programs offer important support for individuals in our community.

One local initiative I want to recognize is the work taking place at COPE Service Dogs.

In 2001, COPE Service Dogs was founded in Barrie to provide a remarkable education program that engages communities and empowers students and others in the training of service dogs that will transform the lives of people with disabilities.

Since its inception, COPE Service Dogs has expanded and opened local chapters in Innisfil, Alliston and Caledon. COPE dogs go on to help individuals in a wide variety of roles, including becoming public access service dogs and support and facility dogs.

COPE provides a variety of programs, including Canines in the Classroom, which offers the opportunity to high school students who are facing difficulty in the classroom to train service dogs. Through the program, students can earn extra school credits and learn important workplace and literacy skills while training a service dog. The program also includes Reading Buddy. Students and their assigned dogs visit elementary schools to promote literacy.

COPE Service Dogs Caledon Chapter began in January 2015 with eight dogs that live with individuals and families in the community and train with students from Humberview Secondary School twice a week. This is a great initiative that is having a positive impact on individuals in the community.

COPE Service Dogs is proud of our Canines in the Classroom program and our students at Humberview, COPE Service Dogs Executive Director Patricia Copeland wrote. We thank MARS Canada Inc. for their ongoing support to help us make this possible. Together we can make our community more inclusive for all people.

There are many ways for people in the community to get involved with COPE Service Dogs. Individuals can help raise a puppy by becoming a Puppy Foster Volunteer. Individuals will take care of a puppy for up to two years or until the dog is placed in his/her career path. While caring for a puppy, you will be responsible for helping train it by attending weekly training classes.

For more information on becoming a Puppy Foster Volunteer please visit www.copedogs.org