

## Gloria Maxx launches HeartEsteem to fight obesity

By Bill Rea

Gloria Maxx is carrying on with her efforts to fight childhood obesity.

The Caledon village area resident recently launched her HeartEsteem initiative at a function at the Exchange in Bolton.

Part of the effort is to encourage people to draw hearts as a means of raising awareness of the mental and emotional anguish connected with childhood obesity, including its possible links to problems later in life. She's also using it as a fund-raising effort for non-government organizations that fight the condition in lands where it's an epidemic.

Maxx said she already has organizations working on the effort in five countries, including Canada, United States, Mexico and Italy.

The effort is slated to last 100 weeks, with the scheduled conclusion being March 11, 2017, which will be Maxx's 50th birthday.

She's hoping to have one million hearts drawn world-wide by then.

The organization in Canada is called Childhood Obesity Advocating Creative Hearts Foundation. She also said she wants to create an on-line platform for families dealing with childhood obesity, so all members of the family can seek coaching as they deal with the condition. The long-term goal is to have a global-reaching foundation, based in Caledon.

She also expressed her gratitude to the Town of Caledon for proclaiming April HeartEsteem Month. This came after a presentation Maxx made to Town council earlier this year. Another of her long-term goals is to have HeartEsteem recognized by the United Nations.

As well, she said she's hoping to line up some corporate CEOs in the effort, but she also stressed she's not looking for handouts.

Obesity is preventable, she declared, adding it's not related to factors like culture or religion. Maxx also pointed out that a child who is overweight feels the same pain, no matter where they're from.

She recalled some of the pain she felt during her life, stating she tried to commit suicide when she was 12. She said she weighed 285 pounds when she was 28. She also had bad dental issues because of her addiction to sugar.

One of the things that helped her was Elton John singing Someone Saved My Life Tonight.

"Someone else's creativity really helped me," she said.

Maxx is also working on a film about the effort, working with students from Canadian film schools, and she's also making contact with schools in other countries.

In addition, Maxx said she is trying to get hearts drawn by some pretty prominent people. She said she's made three attempts to get Pope Francis to draw one, and she's confident he eventually will. She added she's received a thank-you letter from American First Lady Michelle Obama. She planning to try and get a heart from Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

She added she's not in the habit of making appointments with these people. "I just show up at the door and say, 'Hi, I'm Gloria,'" she said, adding she tried that with the Pope.

Financing for the project is a bit precarious, but Maxx said she's not worried. She had been working for an advertising company, but found herself getting depressed, so she quit, and decided to start HeartEsteem, no matter what.

"Did it all on faith," she said. "When you live on faith like that, things come."

"I don't have dreams any more," she added. "I have goals."



Gloria Maxx was outlining the progress of her HeartEsteem effort.



Tammy Elliott of Bolton was among those drawing hearts at the recent HeartEsteem event at the Exchange.