

Growing Opportunities for Adult Life Skills hosting fundraising gala

Bolton non-profit supports people with intellectual disabilities

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After selling out its inaugural fundraising gala in 2023, a local non-profit is hosting an even larger gala in 2024.

On February 9, Growing Opportunities for Adult Life Skills (GOALS) is hosting a "Diamonds & Denim" gala at La Primavera Event Space in Woodbridge.

GOALS is a day program and respite service that services youth and adults with intellectual disabilities.

The Diamonds & Denim gala begins at 6:30 p.m. and will feature a silent auction, dinner, dancing and more. Tickets for the gala are available on GOALS' website, www.goalsgrowingopp.ca.

Alannah Forgiarini and Chantal Ferguson are the founders of GOALS. Forgiarini explained that GOALS, which has its office and program space in Bolton, opened in 2020 just one week before the world got shut down by the COVID-19 pandemic.

She said GOALS offers a wide variety of programs and services, such as employment training, evening and weekend excursions, and day programs.

Due to the pandemic, GOALS wasn't able to hold any large fundraisers in its first few years. In 2023, it was able to host its first-ever fundraising gala and it was a sold-out success. This year, GOALS is hosting its gala at an even bigger venue thanks to demand.

In 2023, GOALS was able to purchase an accessible van thanks to its gala. This year, it is fundraising for another vehicle and the ability to hire additional staff to meet increasing demand for its services.

"We're growing, but we need to hire more staff" we have people that are on waiting lists and we want to expand the program more than anything," said Forgiarini.

She said GOALS tries to have a four to one participant to staff member ratio, and it's become increasingly hard with the rising cost of everything in today's economy.

"We're hoping that raising funds can help us," said Forgiarini.

She said GOALS strives to provide the best opportunities for its program participants, offering them fresh and new things to do.

"We do all kinds of fun stuff " go to Niagara Falls, the movies, see new exhibits," said Forgiarini. "We want participants to have the same experiences anyone else would have."

She explained many participants have been in day programs for years, so it's important to keep providing new experiences so participants can learn and grow.

Forgiarini said ticket sales so far for the 2024 gala are going well. She said GOALS is also happily accepting business sponsorships and silent auction item donations for its gala. More information on this can also be found on GOALS' website.