

HomeJames-Caledon set to wrap operations this year

Farewell dinner will take place October 25

By Brock Weir

HomeJames-Caledon has announced it will cease operations this year.

An offshoot of Operation Rednose, HomeJames-Caledon has been dedicated to providing residents with a free, safe ride home over the holiday season through a designated driver service, using their own vehicles.

In a statement, organizers say the decision to wrap up the service this year was not taken lightly and was announced "with both gratitude and a touch of sadness."

"HomeJames-Caledon began its journey as a chapter of Quebec-based Operation Rednose, and in 2013, it evolved into the Caledon chapter of the Community Designated Drivers Association, a registered Ontario non-profit founded by Stan Janes and other dedicated individuals in Chatham, Ontario," they said. "With the support of founding sponsors including the Bolton Rotary, Bolton Kinsmen, the Town of Caledon, the Ontario Provincial Police, and every new car dealer in Bolton, HomeJames has been a beacon of safety in our community.

"Our mission has always been to ensure that every person asking for help during the holiday season, from mid-November to New Year's Eve, received a safe ride home in their own vehicle with their passengers, regardless of the reason for impairment. This commitment to safety required the dedication of up to 161 volunteers each season, working as call takers, dispatchers, drivers, and communicators, supported by a sophisticated communication system. Together, we have safely delivered thousands of people home during our operations, and we are proud to note that on the nights we operated, the OPP reported no serious traffic collisions involving impaired driving.

"However, the time has come for us to close this chapter. As we do so, we reflect on the incredible journey that HomeJames-Caledon has taken and the many lives we have touched along the way. We are deeply grateful for our community's service clubs, dealerships, and supporters, whose donations and volunteer efforts have made this service possible.

"As we say goodbye, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks to every volunteer, and sponsor who believed in our mission and helped us carry it out. Your support has made a lasting impact on the safety of our community, and for that, we will always be grateful."

It's not, however, quite the end of the road for HomeJames-Caledon "at least not yet.

The organization has planned a farewell dinner set for October 25 at 7 p.m. at Caesar's in Bolton. Anyone interested is asked to RSVP by September 30 to volunteer@homejames-caledon.ca.