

HomeJames celebrates another successful holiday season

By Bill Rea

The record remains clean.

There have been no fatal or serious injury accidents in Caledon during nights when HomeJames has been operating.

The program, which provides free designated driver services to people requesting a safe ride home within Caledon and its immediately surrounding neighbourhoods if they think they might have consumed too much alcohol while celebrating, operated over 15 nights leading up to the holidays.

It was a time last Thursday to offer appreciation to the volunteers who provided the service.

"Job well done," Mayor Allan Thompson declared.

He said he was out the last Friday night of the year, on a team that included Caledon OPP Inspector Ryan Carothers. He was also impressed that there have been no serious accidents the nights when it operates.

"I have to say the track record still stands," he commented.

"Getting people home is the key function," he added.

"Nothing happens without good people doing good work," HomeJames Caledon Chairman Tayler Parnaby observed, pointing out the program has been operating in Caledon for 10 years, first as Operation Red Nose and later changing to HomeJames. That means a lot of people have arrived home safe over those years.

"That's because of people like you," he declared.

The program ran Friday and Saturday nights, starting Nov. 17 and going until the end of the year, as well as New Year's Eve, which fell on a Sunday.

Parnaby said there were 380 runs which resulted in 1,210 people getting home safe. It ran through the efforts of 126 volunteers, who averaged 2.77 shifts. They travelled almost 10,000 kilometres over the 15 nights.

The service is free, but most clients offer some money as a contribution, and that came to a total of \$8,276.53 this year.

There were a few complications this year. One of them involved the computer system used for the program. Parnaby said they had to scramble to get things going, but they did. He added the dispatch system they used is world-class. Dispatchers were able to keep track of where teams were at all times, meaning they were able to have calls answered by the nearest available group. Parnaby called that system "enormously efficient."

Assistance came from other sources too.

Parnaby commented on the former Citizens on Patrol program, which had to fold a couple of years ago because of problems getting insurance. The program had some assets, so Caledon OPP saw that a large number of gas cards went HomeJames' way. Parnaby called it "the biggest pile of gas cards you could imagine."

"Thank you very much for saving lives in our community," Carothers told the volunteers, pointing out their efforts help prevent tragedies. "Thank you for taking the time away from your family and your friends. We do save lives and we do prevent injuries."

He added the program spares his officers the ordeal of going to the homes of accident victims to break the news to families.

Carothers also said he volunteers for the program because it's important, but he added it's also fun.

"HomeJames exists in our community because of you," Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones said in a statement that was read by Parnaby. "Thank you for making a difference."

"HomeJames is truly a large and collaborative effort," Dufferin-Caledon MP David Tilson commented, adding it's a real feat to organize it all. "HomeJames seems to do it seamlessly."

"Your success has meant that our roads are safe," he added. "You've made a positive difference in our community, and it's deeply appreciated."



Mayor Allan Thompson expressed appreciation of the Town to HomeJames ? Caledon Chairman Tayler Parnaby.



Caledon OPP?Inspector Ryan Carothers thanked HomeJames volunteers for helping to save lives on Caledon roads over the holidays.