

HomeJames thanks those who volunteered over the holidays

By Bill Rea

In just about all respects, the 2014 numbers for the HomeJames program in Caledon were ahead of the 2013 figures. The one notable exception was in the number of volunteers. That figure was down by about 15 per cent over the previous year. The program has been running a number of years in Caledon, with the main focus on the Holiday season. People can phone the dispatch centre if they fear they've had too much to drink. A team of three will respond and get the client, his or her passengers and their car home safe.

It ran 14 nights over the holidays, including New Year's Eve, as opposed to 13 last year. There were 404 calls responded to over those 14 evenings (up from 284 the previous year), according to figures provided by program organizers, and volunteers travelled 12,753 kilometres and carried 903 passengers. Last year saw 8,760 kilometres travelled to transport 665 people. Not surprisingly, New Year's Eve was the busiest night, with 71 calls. Th 41 volunteers on deck that night travelled 2,239 kilometres to get 174 people home.

Over the 14 nights, there were a total of 386 volunteers, working out to an average of 27.6 people per shift.

This contrasted with the 427 people who volunteered for the 13 shifts in the 2013 campaign, averaging 32.8.

Program organizers set aside time recently to thank the volunteers at a reception at the Royal Ambassador Event Centre.

‘You guys are fantastic,’ declared broadcaster Tayer Parnaby, who was running the program this year with Bernie Rochon.

He added this is the only campaign that he's aware of that sees all the car dealers in the community taking part. The dealers provided the shuttle vehicles.

‘You show you care about your neighbours,’ Mayor Allan Thompson told the volunteers, adding they helped keep Caledon roads safe while raising awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving. ‘This program works, but it couldn't work without all of you. This is what makes Caledon so special.’

Inspector Tim Melanson, commander of Caledon OPP, pointed out there were no fatalities or injuries resulting from drinking and driving the nights HomeJames was operating.

‘That's just outstanding,’ he said. ‘You guys did a tremendous job.’

He also observed there were many young drivers who realized they might have trouble and took advantage of the program.

‘When HomeJames is on, we all breathe a sigh of relief,’ commented Caledon Fire Chief David Forfar.

People taking part in the program often made donations in appreciation, and those funds are donated to programs in the community.

A contribution of \$3,000 was made last week to the Bolton Sea Cadet program. The presentation was made by Regina Gordon, who's late husband Robert was an original Board member of HomeJames, who also put in 27 volunteer shifts.

‘Bob believed in service and he believed in being actively involved in his community,’ she said.



Regina Gordon (second from left) made a presentation to the Bolton Sea Cadet program. The \$3,000 was part of the money collected from donations made by clients using the HomeJames program. Photos by Bill Rea



Broadcaster Tayler Parnaby said the HomeJames volunteers were ?fantastic.?



Mayor Allan Thompson was among those who put in a shift volunteering for HomeJames over the holidays.



Caledon OPP?Inspector Tim Melanson stressed there were no traffic injuries or fatalities in Caledon the nights HomeJames was operating.



Fire Chief David Forfar expressed appreciation on behalf of Caledon Fire and Emergency Services.