

Meaghan's Music Room receives \$30,000 grant to provide music therapy locally

By **Robert Belardi and Chair Robert J. Ward**

The Meaghan Zaremba Music Room, also known as Meaghan's Music Room, has received a \$30,000 grant from the Government of Ontario's Community Building Fund - Operating Stream.

This grant, delivered by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, supports the organization's operating expenses during a challenging period for fundraising and sponsorship revenues.

"Meaghan's Music Room has continued to find innovative ways to offer music therapy and instruction of music for special needs individuals in our community," said Sylvia Jones, MPP for Dufferin-Caledon.

"This Community Building Fund - Operating stream grant, delivered by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, will help ensure that Meaghan's Music Room can continue to support their students who depend on music therapy."

Meaghan's Music Room delivers therapeutic and recreational music sessions to a racially diverse group of local autistic and special needs individuals, helping many to participate in affordable music programs, and overcome financial hardship and isolation. These sessions make a significant impact by helping to generate confidence, social skills, and increased mobility for the participants.

During the pandemic, Meaghan's Music Room saw reduced funding from traditional sources, while the costs of rent and other expenses remained. At the same time, the organization incurred new expenses in adapting programs for safe delivery during COVID. This funding will greatly assist in covering costs during 2022, as the organization continues to adapt its programs for safe delivery, refine its fundraising strategy, and meet the needs of the community.

"The impact of this grant cannot be understated," said Robert Ward, Chair of Meaghan's Music Room.

"As a Charity that relies on donations and corporate sponsors to support our program, this grant has allowed Meaghan's Music Room to continue to provide a unique and vital music program during difficult fiscal times. Our program has become an important, therapeutic part of the daily lives of special needs individuals from many local organizations such as White Birch Day Program, Brampton and Caledon Community Living, Growing Opportunities For Adult Life Skills, and St. Michael Secondary School, among others. Physically and mentally challenged individuals from a variety of cultures and races regularly take part in programs that strive to create the confidence and capability for them to integrate into society through participation in a service that is otherwise unavailable in the region."

Meaghan Zaremba suffered severe brain damage from a tragic car accident at the age of five.

Faced with a grim prognosis that she might never be able to care for herself, those around her knew her spirit was strong and, after countless surgeries, she began to blossom into an amazing young woman.

She credits the power of music therapy as a catalyst to her progress.

In 2013, Zaremba, served as the inspiration for those around her to create a program that could be a resource in the Bolton community for individuals with special needs challenges.

Over time, awareness of the program grew, creating steadily increasing demand for participation from additional groups that saw the improvement in the lives of participants. By 2017, the waiting list for participants was more than what the organization could handle.

?So, in 2018, a group of community-minded leaders and advisors worked together to transform MMR into the Not-for-profit Charitable Organization it now has become,? Ward said.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is an agency of the Government of Ontario, and one of Canada's leading granting foundations. Last year, nearly \$112M was invested into 1,384 community projects and partnerships to build healthy and vibrant communities and strengthen the impact of Ontario's non-profit sector. In 2020/21, OTF supported Ontario's economic recovery by helping non-profit organizations rebuild and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Visit otf.ca to learn more.

More information about Meaghan's Music Room is available at www.meaghansmusicroom.ca.