

Move For Kids? Sake aims to raise \$100,000 for local youth programs

By Rob Paul

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel have long been a strong supporter of youth in the Regional programs that have helped positively impact over 1,800 youth in the community.

Every dollar invested into the agencies programming returns between \$18 and \$23 to society through taxes, higher incomes, volunteerism, and charitable donations.

One of the pillars of its programming for decades has been the Tim Hortons Bowl for Kids' Sake event, which saw community members raise funds for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel with the hard work leading up to an evening of bowling.

When the pandemic hit, that meant Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel would have to make a change to the event and that's how Move For Kids' Sake came together.

This year's event began February 1 and is running through March 31.

“Basically, what we used to have in this same time frame, which goes back to the beginning of Big Brothers Big Sisters, was our Tim Hortons Bowl for Kids' Sake event,” said Lori Plati, Public Relations Manager for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel. “That's an event we'd been running within Peel Region since 1968, so a really long time. Over 50 years, we had that event but then, of course, 2020 was the last year we were able to have that in-person event. We had to pivot and look for new ways of doing things and hopefully engaging some of those same people who participated in our bowling event who so graciously helped us raise very needed funds for our mentoring programs.

“We came up with the idea of Move for Kids' Sake, the whole setup is the same as our bowling events with people registering and collecting pledges before having a fun day of bowling. But we were thinking with everything going on with the pandemic we could pivot to something that encourages people to be healthy and gets them out and moving. This is still pledge-based but now people can pick the activity that they'd like to do, so it's personalized to them, and they can do it as a team with the people within their bubble or they can do it individually.”

The fundraiser is a big part of keeping the support programs that Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel offer, and they've never been more important than during the pandemic with the struggles youth have dealt with over the last two years as a result.

“The idea is just to sign up, decide what activity you'll do, hopefully recruit some friends and family to be on your team, set a goal that you'd like to achieve, and get out there and collect donations,” Plati said. “It can be anything they want to do and the whole idea is that it's benefitting that person's own physical and mental health and getting them active while at the same time supporting mental health of young people in the community that they live by allowing us to have the funds necessary to ensure we have mentors who are meeting with our youth. Even though it's primarily virtual right now, it's such a necessary thing to have them meet with mentors during the pandemic when they're feeling more isolated. Youth are having more anxiety with all the change in their lives so having the stability of having a mentor has really been a great support for many of them these last few years.”

The flexibility and creativity that Move For Kids' Sake gives participants has been a bright positive that came out of a less than ideal situation for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel, but it's ultimately been a blessing in disguise throughout the pandemic.

“If someone's a runner, for every \$20 that's donated to them they're going to run a kilometre or someone who wants to get in better shape could do a pushup for every dollar donated to them,” said Plati. “It's whatever they want to do. We have one girl that is snowshoeing for all her donations, one person is jumping rope, another is rowing. We've let people know that they can either choose to save up until they've reached their goal and do their activity all at once?so some people may end up running 25 kilometres at the

end?or they can choose to do more of a daily activity, like committing to 100 pushups every day until the end of March. We also encourage people to take photos and videos and make it fun by sharing them with the people who are supporting them and to share it with us so we can highlight it on our social media. We've had hilarious things happen in the past; one of our Big Brothers set the goal of reaching \$1,000 to eat three chili peppers and another Big Brother videoed himself bench-pressing his girlfriend. The whole thing is to get people out having fun in a safe way for a needed support for our agency to keep it going.?

Despite last year being a pivot to the virtual fundraiser, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel was able to reach a big fundraising milestone.

?It was great; we were so happy with the results and had a lot of participants?we raised over \$60,000, which is great for a first-time event,? Plati said. ?We had great participation from Peel Regional Police, who have always been our strongest supporter. We had the Town of Caledon involved and a lot of people within our agency were involved?like our Big and Little Sister of the Year were climbing staircases for every donation they got. It was inspiring to see so many people posting the things they were doing and seeing the money they were raising. It was a great overall experience and a lot of other agencies in Ontario did the same event, we had about 10 different agencies we worked with to develop the event.?

Given the success of the virtual event, when the pandemic allows for the in-person fundraiser to resume, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel plans to keep the Move For Kids' Sake aspect of it along with the night of bowling.

?Our hope this year was to do a bit of a hybrid with the event so if you wanted to come out and bowl you could bowl, or if you wanted to do a virtual activity you could but then with what happened during December, we decided to go with 100 per cent virtual,? Plati said. ?But the idea going forward will be to allow for virtual if they want to because it's a great way for people who aren't into bowling to support us and have fun. It gives people who are active, and community minded the chance to be involved in it on their own time and the people who love to get out and be with other people can come out and bowl with us. That's the goal long-term, have it hybrid and allow people to get active in whatever way they want to.?

As for a fundraising goal this year, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel have set their sights high with the success of last year.

?Our goal is very adventurous this year: we're shooting for \$100,000 this year and we're working with York Region as well, so we figure we have a bigger area with more people involved so we have increased our goal,? said Plati. ?We're pretty confident that now that it's in its second year and people had such a great time last year that we're going to reach that goal.?

To register and donate to Move For Kids' Sake, visit www.bbbspeelyork.ca.