

St. Mike's students showing initiative with community service

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Caledon Community Services (CCS) hosts numerous programs for residents and members of the community of all ages, including high school students.

Students are obligated to complete a total of 40 hours a week of community service in order to graduate high school. This gives youth the opportunity to get out into the community, contribute and learn different life lessons. CCS gives students those opportunities.

“Youth are required to do 40 hours of community service for school. And a lot of them come to us either in panic when they need their hours last minute, or they have a hard time finding a good volunteer role that fits with their interest with their career aspirations, or even if they're a little bit lost in deciding what they want to do after school,” explains Andrea Coles, Volunteer Resource Specialist for Caledon Community Services. “We really believe that it's important that they get out and volunteer, and try different things.”

A group of high school students from St. Michael Catholic Secondary School have formed a committee to volunteer and support CCS through several different initiatives. CCS created a pilot program with St. Michael's due to their strong relationship, as well as strong initiative from the students. CCS is currently only running this program with St. Michael's but hopes as the program grows, they will have the opportunity to partner with other schools in the area.

“We work really closely with St. Michael's, so we have a good relationship. We have a student who is leading the committee, as this is a student run initiative, who is already volunteering within our agency at Evolve Clothing. She was really eager to take on more, and to add some things to her resume for post-secondary applications,” says Coles. “So, she decided to try it out and asked if she would lead it.”

Coles worked with the student to get the initiative off the ground, in which the student went out and gathered a group of friends and other students who wanted to participate, and be given the opportunity to give back to the community.

The first project they put together was the “Closet Cleanup” clothing drive for Evolve Clothing. Students were initially drawn to working with Evolve Clothing and though what better way to support a clothing store, is by gathering donated clothes?

Evolve Clothing along with Evolve Lifestyle are retail stores that sell new or used, but donated clothing, home décor, furniture, where proceeds go back into the community.

“They were encouraging the faculty at the school, as well as their students, to bring donations of either brand new or lightly used clothing, so that we could donate it. We were able to bring the students in the store and explain to them the life cycle of a piece of clothing when it comes in. It gets sorted, and priced and tagged, then set out on the floor before it gets sold,” explains Coles. “We're trying to give them these learning opportunities while they're also giving back to the community.”

Students are learning responsibilities, they are figuring out different areas of work that they could pursue in the future, while working towards gaining their community hours required for graduation.

For more information about Caledon Community Services youth programs, visit ccs4u.org/life-4-youth.