

Two-day Bolton Journey of Hope event is focused on thanking frontline workers and supporting local

By Rob Paul

With Ontario in Step Three of the Roadmap to Reopening, the Caledon community is able to host in-person events again, and Councillor Annette Groves is taking advantage of the opportunity.

With the help of the Bolton Community Crew and VEC Entertainment, on August 13 and 14 at 194 McEwan Drive East in Bolton (Landmark Cinemas parking lot), there will be two days of live entertainment and local food vendors as part of Bolton's Journey of Hope event.

The event's focus is to bring the community together in celebration and support of one another, the frontline workers, and local businesses.

Annette came up with the idea and then she included the Bolton Community Crew and VEC Entertainment who is also a local business in Bolton, said Bolton Community Crew's Vilma Tarquini. In collaboration with the Bolton Community Crew and VEC Entertainment we wanted to do something for the community to show appreciation to the frontline workers and the businesses that struggled through the pandemic with the lockdown.

This is also for our residents, to give them hope and a night where they can actually go out with their families and enjoy themselves. All of this has affected a lot of people and residents that I speak to and the local businesses. And it will have local vendors to help out the businesses as much as we can. This is something we've been really looking forward to.

Without Groves leading the way Tarquini says the event wouldn't be moving forward, and points to her tireless efforts in raising funds for community events as a reason why Bolton is so strong.

Annette came up with the idea and raised all the funds, she said. She always raises the funds for all of our events; we threw Midnight Madness for example and Annette raised \$20,000 for that. She's done so much for our community.

The free concert has long lineup of talented names that the Bolton Community Crew is excited about and Tarquini says it's all thanks to VEC Entertainment.

We're going to have live entertainment through VEC Entertainment they're taking care of the concert side of it, which actually has award-winning performers and we're really looking forward to it, she said. We're going to have great entertainers like Liberty Silver we're going back to the 80s we have Absolute Journey and they're fantastic, and we've even got some Caledon talent too with Sylvia Kay.

The support of passionate community members in the Bolton Community Crew is what helped the idea take off, but having residents who are always willing to lend a hand is a big piece of the puzzle too, says Tarquini.

The Bolton Community Crew is just a bunch of volunteers that care about our community, she said. We're active members of the Bolton community and we just want to do everything we can for the residents. Cole O'Donnell, the assistant manager of Zehrs, every time I ask him if he's willing to donate something for free for the community for these events, he says, I will do anything for my community, I've lived here for so many years. He's going to [donate] 12 cases of water and 12 cases of juice, which allows us to give it to the residents free of charge. Every time we run an event, he's donating to us. It makes it so much easier with residents like him.

With the unknown of COVID still looming, Tarquini says it wasn't easy prepping and planning such a big event for the Bolton

community.

?It was difficult because of the lockdown, and they kept changing the rules and regulations,? she said. ?We were hopeful and then we weren't and then we got hopeful again. We started planning this at the beginning of the year and we were always let down because of COVID.?

After 16 months of the pandemic, Tarquini knows all residents are mentally exhausted and hopes that this can act as a getaway for them as well as a 'thank you' to all those who had to keep on working on the frontlines through the tough times.

?Our frontline workers have done so much for us,? she said. ?This isn't just the emergency services, this is for the grocery store workers, the people who had to work through all of this?they're frontline workers, too. I've seen so many young people working throughout COVID just to pay for school, and I'd always thank them because they're frontline workers, too.

?This is for everyone. We're doing all of this because we want to support local and thank our frontline workers. But this is for mental health too. This is for our residents, just to give them the opportunity to get out and enjoy an event with their families. We're doing this for a lot of reasons.?

As the restrictions ease, Tarquini and the Bolton Community Crew are planning more events to help Bolton rebuild as it comes through the impact of the pandemic.

?We're going to organize something else too,? she said. ?Come the fall, we have something else in mind.?