

Vince's Market picks CHATS for Community Product Initiative 2023]

Portion of proceeds at Tottenham store will benefit area seniors programs

By Brock Weir

The purchase of some of your favourite grocery items will help provide services to local seniors, thanks to Vince's Market's Community Product Initiative.

Each year, Vince's, which has locations in Tottenham, Newmarket, Sharon and Uxbridge, picks a local charity or non-profit for which a portion of the sales of selected products will benefit the organization.

This year's beneficiary is the Aurora-based CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors), serving older residents of York Region and South Simcoe, helping them age in place as long as possible through a variety of programs.

"CHATS serves many communities, so that's why we were excited to choose them," said Maria Ciarlandini, Community Support Ambassador for Vince's Market. "We wanted to learn a lot more about the organization throughout the year, which we're excited about, and while learning ourselves we're going to share that with the community so they are also aware of the opportunities and programs that CHATS serves."

From the perspective of CHATS President and CEO Christina Bisanz, this is a "great example" of how "community-based businesses do support local organizations and can directly support the people who live in the communities that help support those businesses as well."

"We are so grateful to be selected by Vince's as the recipient of the funding that will be raised through this initiative," said Bisanz. "We do have increasing demands for supports and services with an aging population in York Region and South Simcoe, and funding like this helps us to provide subsidies to those who may not be able to otherwise afford the program fees [where applicable]. It's a valuable opportunity for us to use those funds in a way to provide more access to more people."

"The second benefit of this that we're really thrilled about is it is helping us to have more profile in the community because Vince's is a popular local grocery store in a number of different communities in South Simcoe and York Region. By having the poster that is talking about CHATS, it helps to increase awareness of us as an organization and the services that we provide. It's really a twofold benefit for us."

The pandemic, she added, has had "a dramatic impact" on the lives of seniors in all communities they serve and, in addition to the challenges around social isolation and economic challenges, the demand for food and housing security and transportation is increasing.

"The ability for the most vulnerable in those communities to be able to afford those services is significantly constrained," said Bisanz. "Funding like this does help us offset the cost so that no senior gets left behind because of an inability to pay."

Representatives from CHATS were at the Sharon location recently for the announcement, alongside representatives of the Canadian Mental Health Association of York Region and South Simcoe, who were the beneficiaries of the 2022 Community Product Initiative.

For the first time, Vince's raised \$30,000 for their chosen partner and, cumulatively, they have now passed the \$100,000 mark in funds raised.

"We're all about giving back to the community, which is why I have my job as the ambassador," said Ciarlandini. "A big part of the Community Product Initiative is bringing in the grocery industry and suppliers to join us to give back to our community and I think

that domino effect is why the community partners are getting more spotlight and people are noticing it more. It has become an annual initiative that people are aware of and want to be a part of.?