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Where newcomers and empty-nesters find new connections: CFUW Headwaters

By Martina Rowley

OPINION

When I was a fresh newcomer to Orangeville in 2017, I knew exactly one person in my new hometown! With plans to immerse myself in the community quickly to make new friends and feel at home, I first heard about CFUW, a local women's group, at the weekly farmers' market beside the beautiful, historic Town Hall building.

Asking a very friendly representative at one of the vendor tables, ?What is CFUW and what do you do?? I made my first and lasting connection with one of the club's members. It sounded interesting and as luck had it, their Annual Meet and Greet was less than a week away. I did not know the meeting location or how to get there without a car, ?No problem,? she said, ?I can arrange for one of our members to pick you up.? And the rest, as they say, is history.

Speaking of history, the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) is a non-partisan, voluntary, self-funded organization with over 100 clubs across Canada. Founded in 1919, membership was originally for women with a degree but that is no longer a requirement. That said, you will certainly meet very friendly and smart women there.

The mandate of CFUW is twofold: Provincially and nationally, to advocate to promote social justice and the status of women and girls (including promoting human rights, public education and peace). In fact, CFUW?the federal entity?holds a special consultative status with the United Nations and belongs to the Education Committee of the Canadian Commission to UNESCO. Closer to home, the club supports and runs internal fundraising events to provide scholarships for promising female students heading into post-secondary education at one of the high schools in our area.

Locally, CFUW is a women's social club; meant to bring women from all walks of life together to meet, share some fun hours, make new friends, feel supported and share meals and outings. It is about fun, support and companionship and that is what drew me to joining all those years ago. Having access to several monthly get-togethers with my chosen interest groups was instrumental in meeting many lovely individuals and making new friends in a short time?many of whom were as new to Orangeville as I was, and others who had lived ?up here? for decades.

It meant it took me no time at all to feel very much at home and not isolated in Orangeville.

Members can sign up for as many of the interest groups as they want, with options ranging from various food clubs (breakfast or dining out, potluck soup & salad club, vegan cooking), a Friday night social, or active living (e.g. hiking, bowling, skating or snowshoeing), to art and book clubs, travel discussion and day-tripping, needle arts or Women in Action activism.

On September 18, CFUW Headwaters are holding their annual Meet & Greet Social at The Centre, 375 Hansen Boulevard, Orangeville, from 7 p.m. Attendance is free and women from all walks of life from the Headwaters area are invited, no pre-registration required. The event is to introduce the year's new executive team, register new members and open sign-ups for these interest groups, which always fill up fast. Two guest speakers will talk about the important programs they lead to support our community: Carrie-Anne DeCaprio, Donor Engagement and Outreach Manager at the Orangeville Food Bank, and Martina Rowley, member of Sustainable Orangeville and coordinator of the Orangeville Urban Harvest Program.

Annual membership is affordable at $100 ($25 of which goes towards the Club's Scholarship Fund) and includes a monthly newsletter, monthly general meetings with interesting guest speakers and CFUW membership discount programs with some companies.

At this year's event, there will be some nice door prizes too?for new visitors who register at the event, as well as existing members!

New visitors will receive one ticket for the door prizes' draw, and existing members who bring a guest will get two tickets. I remember the day I signed up and won a gorgeous, purple potted chrysanthemum. You can find out more about CFUW at www.cfuwheadwaters.com or email info@cfuwheadwaters.com if you can't attend on September 18.