

Autism activists plan a 'killer' evening of murder mystery fun all for a good cause

Last year, Deanna Avison held a fundraiser for Autism Canada called 'Acapella for Autism' and this spring, she asks the community to join in a fun filled evening of 'Murder' at the Shelburne Golf and Country Club to raise more funds for the cause.

Guests will enjoy a delicious dinner, browse the silent auction tables and enjoy a fantastic social event while supporting children with Autism and other challenges within the Special Educational programs in local elementary schools.

A grandmother to twins with Autism, Ms. Avison says she is driven by the need to provide 'a voice' for her grandchildren and other kids who face the challenges of living on the Autism Spectrum.

She has been joined in her efforts by Megan Young of Shelburne Golf and Country Club, who Ms. Avison says has 'graciously given her time, and much more towards this event.'

'When I approached her about wanting to do the fundraiser, she jumped right on board,' says Ms. Avison. 'She has been fabulous.'

The pair have been working on the event for a few months now and Ms. Avison says she is excited. 'The evening is a Mystery Theatre Dinner and we have hired professionals from Murder for Hire to do a mystery called Mysteria Lane. We are hoping people will come out and support our local schools' Special Education programs.'

'Murder for Hire' is a theatrical company from near London, ON, dedicated to interactive murder mystery dinner theatre. Established in 2006, 'Murder for Hire' is made up individuals from many professions who take on roles in the company for the joy of performing.

The 'killer' troupe notes the evening begins with meeting the usual suspects and the plot thickens during dinner, with clues dropped as the characters continue to mingle with the guests.

'There may be a gunshot, a piercing scream or simply a mysterious disappearance and the strange woman at your table or the crazy man seated next to you may be the victim or the foe,' says the company.

Scripts are 'intended to be fun, perhaps even a bit silly at times, to offset the fact that one of the guests at this event may not make it out alive.'

Ms. Avison says she is grateful to have sponsors like Greg Patton at GP Carpentry and the Shelburne branch of the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) helping to support the event.

Statistics show 1 in 68 children are diagnosed with Autism, she says, and that it 'comes in various forms, mild, moderate and severe with no two children on the spectrum the same.'

Children with Autism 'learn very differently,' she adds.

Living with her daughter and twins on the spectrum, Ms. Avison says sees first hand every day the challenges families face at home and in school.

'Along with challenges there are a lot of very proud moments and accomplishments as well,' says the dedicated grandmother. 'The more awareness we can bring to people about Autism, the better understood it becomes. Children with Autism are very intelligent and can learn given the chance. With Special Educational programs in place, it helps the children cope with anxiety, noises, and all the other things that are over stimulating to them.'

'There are calming rooms in the schools, where there are tools such as sensory items, iPads and computers, as well as Educational

Assistants that are very attentive to the children, as well as Special Education teachers.

?I am very proud of my grandchildren; everyday they teach me something. My wish is that people will support these children with the hope, love, understanding and respect that they deserve.?

The funds will be donated to the Special Education Programs at Hyland Heights E.S, Centennial Highlands E.S., Glenbrook E.S and Primrose E.S.

For tickets order at events.constantcontact.com/register/event, or call the Shelburne Golf Course at 519-925-5581 or book through Hearts Wide Open for Autism Facebook page where there is a secure link to register.

By Marni Walsh