

Non-profit Appreciation Week celebrates 150+ non-profits in Dufferin County

Non-profit Appreciation Week kicked off Feb. 14 in Dufferin County and across Ontario. It's a time to show our love and say "thank you" for everything that charities and non-profit organizations do to enrich our quality of life.

More than 150 non-profit organizations serve the people of Dufferin County. Their programs span the spectrum of community need and opportunities. They range from food banks, shelters and mental health to the arts, sports and recreation, faith, the environment, and more.

"Charities and non-profits are literally the heart of our community," said Michele Fisher, Executive Director, Dufferin Community Foundation. "It is almost impossible to imagine what our life would be like without the sheer scope of their helping programs, care and leadership."

On the frontlines through the pandemic

Non-profit Appreciation Week comes at a time when the sector has been particularly challenged to deliver services through pandemic lockdowns, restrictions and scarce resources.

In response, non-profit staff came through with creative, local solutions to help those most in need. Live virtual concerts, home delivery of food kits, porch visits, and online programs for mental health and physical fitness are just a sampling of the "pivots" that helped meet increased demand.

"A special thank you goes out to our non-profit partners who continue to provide much-needed services throughout the pandemic - often to our most vulnerable residents," said Anna McGregor, Director of Community Services for Dufferin County. "The non-profit sector plays a vital role in the human services landscape."

Long hours, low pay, little recognition - and they love what they do

More than 850,000 people work in the non-profit sector across Ontario. As a group, they are highly skilled, well-educated and driven by the mission of their work. They also tend to work long hours and for much less pay than their counterparts in other sectors, and receive little public recognition for their role.

This changed last December when the provincial government established Non-profit Appreciation Week as an annual celebration the third week of February. Bill 9, the Private Members Bill to create the week, received unanimous, all-party support. Prior to this, the Bhayana Family Foundation, with partners United Way and the Ontario Non-profit Network, had advocated for sector-wide recognition. Hundreds of organizations, including some in Dufferin County, supported the effort.

Sylvia Jones, MPP Dufferin-Caledon said, "Non-profit Appreciation Week recognizes the vital contributions of the non-profit sector. Many initiatives are supported by non-profit organizations including; seniors' services, homeless shelters, crisis support lines, skills development, new immigrant support, mental health support, and specialized help for children, and family support services - to programs that promote arts and culture, environmental sustainability and recreation."

"Our government has also made changes to the police records check so that non-profit volunteers can get a free police record check and use it for multiple organizations. Thank you to all non-profit organizations in our community for making a difference in the lives of others," she added.

Local businesses show their appreciation

On Friday, February 18, 2022, some coffee shops and restaurants are offering a free treat to anyone who works in a non-profit

organization. All that non-profit staff have to do is bring their business card or their e-mail signature to show where they work.

Free coffee at:

? Mochaberry Coffee, 177 Broadway, Orangeville

? French Press Bistro, 121 First St, Orangeville

? Superburger, 506269 Hwy 89, Primrose

? Sunrise Diner, 115 Main St E, Shelburne

Free samosa at:

? Curry Mantra, 520 Riddell Rd, Orangeville

?Thank you to every local business and organization that is helping to bring well-deserved recognition to our non-profits,? said Dufferin Board of Trade (DBOT) Executive Director, Diana Morris. ?They are a strong and resilient sector, working primarily behind the scenes to make our community better. We are pleased to see them getting recognized.?

Said Glenna Banda, Executive Director, United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin, ?Not only do Ontario's non-profits provide vital community services, they contribute 7.9% to the province's GDP. This is a week for us to celebrate their heart and compassion, their knowledge and expertise, and what they add to our community and our economy. We encourage the public to take time this week to say thank you, learn more about local non-profits or consider donating to their important work!?

How to get involved

Organizers for Non-profit Appreciation Week are urging people and businesses who want to show their love to post a video or story on social media using the hashtag #nonprofitawarenessweek. It can be a thank you to the sector, a personal story about being helped, a shout-out to an unsung hero, or why you support the non-profits that you do.

Headwaters Communities In Action (HCIA) has created a webpage with more information and profiles on some of our local non-profits at headwaterscommunities.org/nonprofitappreciation-week. Dufferin Community Foundation will be sharing the Non-profit Spotlights on social media every day this week.

?The business of caring and serving is hard work. In addition to the important and heartwarming stories you see through the services they deliver to the public, there is so much more to running a non-profit that you don't see - work that is often arduous, complex and unsung,? said Jennifer Payne, Executive Director of HCIA. ?With Non-profit Appreciation Week, they will be unsung no more! A big thank you for ALL that you do.?

Elaine Capes, DC MOVES Coordinator, concurs: ?The not-for-profit/charitable sector is finally getting due recognition for the critical role they play in creating individual, community and population wellbeing. I am grateful for this vital pillar providing collective, public and social benefit in our community. I am grateful for the many passion and compassion-driven people who work tirelessly and creatively to deliver their services. We are blessed. Thank you all.?

Non-profit Appreciation Week organizing partners are: Headwaters Communities in Action, Dufferin Board of Trade, DC MOVES, United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin, Dufferin Community Foundation, and Dufferin County in coordination with Sylvia Jones, MPP.