

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin celebrating 50th anniversary with gala dinner

By Paula Brown

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin is celebrating 50 years of operation in the community, as they continue their mission of empowering youth to build their biggest possible futures through one-on-one mentoring.

'We feel truly honored to have reached this milestone. Many other smaller community Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies have had to close their doors over the years. Ours has survived because of the kindness and generosity of our local community,' said executive director, Nancy Stallmach. 'Throughout the years, thousands of children and volunteers have had life changing relationships created by our local agency.'

The local Big Brothers Big Sisters agency was started in 1972 by Bill Bissell, the then principal of Princess Elizabeth Public School. With first-hand experience having been a Big Brother in Toronto, Bissell recognized that many students at the school could benefit from a mentoring program.

Initially the agency was established as Big Brothers of Orangeville and only served boys within the town. In 1977, the Big Sisters agency was started in Dufferin County as a separate agency, but by the 1990s the two groups merged to create the existing Big Brothers Big Sisters of Dufferin & District.

Today, they serve youth from across Dufferin County, Alton and Erin.

To celebrate the five-decade achievement, Big Brothers Big Sisters is hosting a gala dinner on Sept. 24 at the Museum of Dufferin (MOD). The theme of the gala is '50 Years of Changing Lives'.

The evening will begin with a cocktail hour and hors d'oeuvres, followed by a dinner and dessert bar provided by Lavender Blue Catering. Guests at the gala will enjoy a silent auction, games, and other activities as well as a dance and live performance by The Campfire Poets to close out the night.

While the gala is a celebration of the agency's five-decades of operation it will also serve a larger purpose - fundraising to support the programs and services offered by Big Brothers Big Sisters.

'We're seeing a marked increase in demand for our programs as the full effects of the pandemic become more apparent. Money raised during the Gala will help us move these children off the waiting list and matched with a caring mentor,' said Stallmach.

Early bird pricing of \$165 per ticket or \$1,320 per table of 8 is available until Sept. 8. Sponsorship opportunities for the event are also available.

For more information go to bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/dufferin or call 519-941-6431.