

Big Brothers Big Sisters Dufferin fundraises at annual golf tournament

Written By **Paula Brown**

Dufferin County residents teed up and took the swing to help raise needed funds for a local organization helping to support youth in the community.

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Dufferin and District hosted their 30th annual golf tournament last Thursday (June 13) at the Shelburne Golf and Country Club. The annual golf tournament is one of the organization's biggest fundraising events of the year.

"It's wonderful to be able to run the [golf tournament] through the years and keep on raising money to be able to fund our programs," said Nancy Stallmach, executive director of BBBS Dufferin and District. "It's a great way to connect with the community, and we have a lot of support from both golfers and sponsors, helping to raise lots of money to continue to provide our mentoring services for children and youth."

Big Brothers and Big Sisters (BBBS) Canada was founded in 1913 and looks to take kids facing adversity and pair them with a caring mentor, whom they usually spend a few hours every week or two with. The program has existed in the Dufferin County community since the early 1970s.

At this year's annual golf tournament, Big Brothers Big Sisters Dufferin saw 45 golfers take to the fairways and greens at Shelburne Golf and Country Club in order to reach the fundraising goal of \$14,000.

The money raised from the annual golf tournament goes towards supporting Big Brothers Big Sisters' core mentor program, where they match an adult volunteer with a youth in the community to provide guidance and support. The funds also go towards supporting Big Brothers Big Sisters Dufferin's school and group programs as well as their bench program, which is for children on the waitlist awaiting their big brother or big sister match.

"I think a lot of people feel a real affinity for the Big Brothers Big Sisters programs and they see the value of them," said Stallmach. "It's touched a lot of lives over the years in our local community."

Tony Cassar, a golfer in the Big Brothers Big Sisters tournament, knows firsthand the impact the mentorship program has on local youth.

In the 1970s, Cassar and his older brother were among some of the first youth in Dufferin County to be paired with an older mentor following the launch of Big Brothers Big Sisters Dufferin and District.

"It's a fantastic organization to have people volunteering their time to help kids. It's one thing to give money, but for people to actually give their time and become big brothers or big sisters, I think is awesome. It really does have a huge impact on the kids," said Cassar.

While raising funds to support their regular programming, Big Brothers Big Sisters Dufferin is also looking to bring awareness to their need for more volunteers.

Speaking with the Free Press, Stallmach said there are about 15 children with the local Big Brothers and Big Sisters organization who are on a waitlist for their turn to be matched with a big brother or big sister.

"You don't need to have a special skill to do this, it's just about spending time with somebody and creating a friendship," said Stallmach. "Our programs have a huge impact on the lives of the children and youth we serve, but it also has a positive impact on the life of a volunteer as well. So many of our volunteers will say they don't know who gets more out of it, them or the child. It can

be a very rewarding experience to be part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.?

Those interested in learning more about the Big Brothers Big Sisters program or who would like to inquire about becoming a volunteer big brother or big sister can do so by visiting the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Dufferin and District website.