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Export date: Fri Oct 30 21:51:03 2026 / +0000 GMT

B Social Café opens at Dufferin Oaks Long Term Care Home, removing employment barriers

Written By Paula Brown

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Residents and visitors can now have the chance to sit down and enjoy a hot cup of tea or a chilled iced coffee while visiting loved ones at Dufferin Oaks with the opening of a new café.

Local dignitaries and Dufferin Oaks staff joined Community Living Dufferin to celebrate the grand opening of a new B Social Café at Dufferin Oaks Long Term Care Home on June 28.

?It's really exciting to us because we started off small and we're expanding how many employees we're able to hire; this gave us an opportunity to hire three more people and hopefully eventually more,? said Paula Reynolds, employment specialist for Community Living Dufferin. ?It's also exciting to be able to offer this to people who didn't have those [employment] opportunities before and the idea that it may open up for even more people in Shelburne.?

The B Social Café is a social enterprise that's part of Community Living Dufferin and aims to provide job opportunities to people facing barriers to employment. Led by Community Living Dufferin, the business launched in 2019 with locations in the Orangeville courthouse and a pop-up at the Georgian College campus. The social enterprise went on to expand to the snack bars at two Dufferin County arenas, Tony Rose and Alder Street, and in 2022 Community Living Dufferin opened up a café at the Edelbrock Centre in Orangeville.

The café at Dufferin Oaks is the latest location expansion of the B Social Café and currently has three employees.

With a number of sites within Orangeville, the expansion to Dufferin Oaks Long Term Care Home is the organization's first expansion to another Dufferin County community.

?We support people that live in Shelburne through Community Living Dufferin, and we know there's a lot of people there who might be a good fit for this. We thought it was anopportunity to have people be able to work in their own community as opposed to having to travel,? explained Reynolds.

Speaking with the Free Press, Reynolds spoke about the signifi cance of providing job opportunities to people facing barriers to employment.

?The population we work with, people with disabilities, oftentimes don't have opportunities to be employed whether it's from lack of exposure and experience, or social stereotypes,? said Reynolds. ?Oftentimes, they'll apply for jobs, but they don't have anything on their resume so that makes it difficult. They're often overlooked by other people that have more qualifications.?

The model for the B Social Café is geared more toward the employees rather than the employer. For example, if an employee has difficulty with hours due to physical or emotional restraints, then Community Living Dufferin is able to accommodate them with short shifts.

?Because of the resources of our employment staff, we're able to offer a good understanding of the skill sets of the employees that we are hiring and fi t duties around them, as opposed to around the employer,? said Reynolds.

The café at Dufferin Oaks will serve its residents, staff, families and community while providing employment to those looking to enter or re-enter the workforce in an environment suited to their needs.

?When we talk to the people that we hire, they always talk about how much it's given them a purpose and how proud they are to be serving in their community. We see the developing a strong sense of self-worth and belonging, and that's really important for everybody.?

The café will serve a variety of items, including coffee, tea, pop, breakfast sandwiches, yogurts, cookies, muffi ns, and a lunch menu.

The new B Social Café at Dufferin Oaks will be open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.