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Dufferin Community Foundation again dispersing grant funding

Written By **Sam Odrowski**

The Dufferin Community Foundation is again distributing grant funding to local charities with a focus on supporting programs that improve mental health and well-being, as residents have endured over a year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the foundation was able to distribute $30,000 in emergency grants to several Dufferin based not-for-profits in March, this time they're able to provide $35,000 in grant funding, thanks to the support of their generous donors.

?The community without a doubt, has really stepped up in terms of generosity, those that have to give are giving,? noted Debbi Goss, Dufferin Community Foundation co-ordinator.

The four charities that are receiving the $35,000 are Big Brothers and Big Sisters Dufferin and District, Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Peel Dufferin, the Telecheck program offered through Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC), and Family Transition Place (FTP).

Big Brothers and Big Sisters is receiving $10,000 of the funding to add an additional staff member to help make more matches, meaning more children and youth will be matched with big brothers and sisters.

CMHA is also receiving $10,000 to assist with their programs that directly support resident's mental health and well-being.

The Telecheck program at HHCC is getting $9,500, which provides free daily check ins with adults in need of support within the community.

?They've been really suffering because not only can they not contact as many people, but the big challenge is with volunteers, many of their volunteers are mature volunteers who just are not comfortable,? noted Goss.

Lastly, FTP will receive $5,500 for their youth education program, which provides help and a roadmap to healthy relationship education.

The amount of grant funding designated for each organization was dependent on the request they put forward in their application, ranging from $5,000 to $10,000.

Goss said the not-for-profit sector is facing unprecedented challenges, with an increasing demand for mental health services.

Latest polling by CMHA, conducted in March, shows that only a third of Ontarians consider their current state of mental health as ?very good? or ?excellent,? which is a significant decrease from the 52 per cent that was recorded during the organization's first poll last May, a few months into the pandemic.

The latest poll also shows almost three in 10 Ontarians are using more substances to cope with the pandemic, which is up from 21 per cent last summer.

?I think it must be incredibly difficult to work these days in a support position for a charity or not for profit? you can imagine, they're providing services and programs to people, but they're in an overwhelmed position themselves where the need is so great,? Goss explained.

?We know it's a need, that's not going to go away. Some of these interim funds do help provide some stability on the road to having some sustainability for some of these groups, but the challenges are enormous and we know they're not going away anytime soon.

We absolutely applaud anybody that's working in a charity or not for profit environment these days.?

When looking at the eight applications that the Dufferin Community Foundation received for the latest round of mental health support grants, Goss said it was difficult to pick just four.

?Of all of the applications that we've got, you could make a case for every single one of them and that's just the toughest decisions that our review teams have to make. But we definitely felt that these were not only worthwhile, but they also really made a direct link between the grants, and how that would impact positively mental health and well-being,? she explained.

In terms of the Dufferin Community Foundation's long-term goals, the organization is working to build endowments, with the goal of reaching $10 million over 10 years. This will enable the foundation to generate over $400,000 annually through the $10,000,000 that's invested.

The Dufferin Community Foundation already has over $550,000 invested, with most of those funds being sourced through bequests in a will. Some donors generate revenue for the organization through family funds, which donors know will help sustain the organization and continue to positively impact residents of Dufferin County.

Through building endowments, Goss said it's an attempt to ?get off the treadmill of fundraising? and support the community for decades to come.

Going forward, Dufferin Community Foundation is rolling out three $1,500 sponsorship grants, which boost existing programs that could make a positive impact from that amount of funding.

The deadline to apply for those grants is September 1 and they'll be distributed shortly thereafter.

To learn more about the Dufferin Community Foundation visit their website at: https://dufferincommunityfoundation.ca/ or contact them by email through info@dufferincommunityfoundation.ca or by phone at 519-938-0780.

?If you have any questions, just always pick up the phone or give us an email and we're happy to answer any questions you might have,? said Goss.