

Heidi's Walk for Hope raises \$28,000 for Family Transition Place



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Non-profit groups across Canada have been struggling post-pandemic, and that dip in monetary support has extended to some charitable efforts in Orangeville.

The Family Transition Place held its annual Heidi's Walk for Hope on Sept. 24. It's a fundraiser to support FTP's emergency shelter program, counselling, and educational initiatives.

This year's event generated more than \$28,000 from participants who participated in a five-kilometre walk through Island Lake Conservation Area's trail network. It's in memory of Dufferin County resident Heidi Ferguson. She was killed in September 2009 by her estranged husband soon after she filed for divorce to end the marriage.

The memorial walk began in 2012, started by Heidi's parents, Gus and Penny Bogner, as a way to honour their daughter's legacy.

FTP hosts the walk each year as a means to raise awareness and money towards ending violence against women.

Kelly Lee, manager of fund development and communication strategies at FTP in Orangeville, said funds raised through annual FTP fundraisers support unfunded programs, particularly youth education.

"Our youth education programs are designed to teach kids about what healthy relationships look like with the goal of ending the cycle of violence before it begins," she said.

Programming is offered to students in Grades 5 through 12 in schools throughout Caledon and Dufferin County.

"They rely heavily on fundraised dollars," she said. "Available funding streams have changed significantly in the last several years and fundraised dollars are also used to support other essential programs and services for women who have experienced domestic violence and/or homelessness and their children."

This year's walk drew a little more than half of the fundraising goal. Last year, FTP raised more than \$30,000.

"The community responded well to the walk this year, but we have seen a decrease in fundraising support in the last year or so," Lee said.

"This seems to be a challenge non-profit organizations are experiencing across Canada, and likely on a global scale.

?Our goal was to raise \$40,000 but we understand that times are difficult for many in our community right now and truly appreciate the support we received from those who donated, sponsored and participated.?

Indeed, it's something that's being experienced by many organizations and charities operating in these difficult economic times brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

Non-profits have been affected by high inflation, the rise in interest rates, and increased demand, according to Imagine Canada, an organization that strives to strengthen Canadian charities and non-profits so they can better serve individuals and communities.

Basically, the same ripple effect caused by the pandemic that's restricted household finances has reached many charitable efforts.

?While Heidi's Walk for Hope is certainly a fundraising initiative, it also provides with an opportunity to raise awareness about the prevalence of domestic violence in our community,? Lee said. ?Many of the participants who attend this event attend our other annual fundraisers as they are very committed to the work we do.?

She said organizers were heartened to see some new faces at the walk, and she hopes drawing new people will continue to shed light on the prevalent issue of violence against women.

?For some, it may have been an eye opener, but the reality is it is very likely that everyone in this community has either experienced domestic violence themselves, has familial experience with domestic violence or knows someone who has been affected by domestic violence,? she said.

?The more our community is aware that this is happening to friends, family, and co-workers, the more we can do to change the narrative.?