

Local Air Cadets program launches brand new website, takes programming online

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Shelburne's local 164 Royal Canadian Air Cadets Squadron has launched a website and is now offering their program virtually for the remainder of 2020.

"We hope the website will help other families in our community learn about what a great program the cadets is," said 164 Commanding Officer, Captain Ruth Garwood.

The website, which is directed specifically to the 164 Air Cadets, has been developed over the last six months and looks to inform cadets, their families, and community members about the program. The site, as it expands, will include pictures, upcoming activities, and 164 Air Cadets apparel.

"In the past, we've had a closed Facebook group, that's where we've kept a lot of our pictures and we have always communicated with our cadets that way, but now they'll be able to show their extended family and friends what we do and how much fun we have," said Garwood.

The 164 Air Cadets is headquartered by the Shelburne Royal Canadian Legion Branch 220. Capt. Charles Burbank founded the program in 1975 and according to the 164 Air Cadets website, has since had over 1,500 cadets go through the program. Last year, the program had between 30 and 35 cadets, from Shelburne, Orangeville and other surround areas in Dufferin County.

"It involves thousands of cadets and adult leaders across the country, focusing on building leadership skills, citizenship, and community awareness," said Garwood talking about the cadet program.

Along with creating a website, the 164 Air Cadets have also made the move to a virtual program. Back in March, during the cusp of COVID-19, the cadets program switched from in-person to fully virtual, a change that Garwood says happened in a matter of days.

Since then, Staff Officers and Cadet Instructors have been developing a plan to continue teaching lessons from uniforms and ranks to leadership and aviation ? all virtually. While some aspects of the program have been able to make the switch others, such as drill practice, Garwood says will wait until they are back in-person.

"Flexibility and adaptability is what we're stressing to our staff and cadet instructors," said Garwood. "We're hoping that keeping the cadets engaged, keeping it fun for not only the cadets taking the lessons and classes, but the instructors, we're allowing them to be flexible and adaptable which helps them bring more to the table."

Registration for the 164 Air Cadet 2020/2021 program opened in early September and can be found at www.164aircadet.com. Registration is available year round.