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Local community activists combine to launch Dufferin County Canadian Black Association

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

After months of work creating a platform fostering inclusion and equity, the Dufferin County Canadian Black Association (DCCBA) has official launched ? the first of its kind within the County of Dufferin.

?Having this central hub, is the way to have a platform where we can have a voice, where we can share information, where we can collectively understand what is happening within our community, be that strong central voice to be able to effect change, whatever that change may be,? said Alethia O'Hara Stephenson, founder and president of the organization.

Dufferin County Canadian Black Association was registered as an organization back in June by Shelburne resident, Alethia O'Hara Stephenson. O'Hara Stephenson said the organization forms a platform ?where we can collectively have a voice for the black community.?

Although, in the talk stages of establishment for over a year, the Black Lives Matter Marches that occurred both globally and locally early in 2020 as well as the COVID-19 pandemic served as catalyst to its formation.

?There was a heightened need to act, to do something, and to create that central space where we could have an advocacy, have a voice, provided leadership and elevate the black community to a greater position where we can contribute, and of course enhance our experiences as well,? said O'Hara Stephenson.

As an organization the DCCBA is working to bring different educational programs to the community that include coding, financial literacy, tutoring and entry to municipal politics. The organization will also be hosting a series called Ask Our Experts, which is scheduled to start in January of 2021.

?We have different experts in the industry coming on to provide advice, valuable information that will benefit the community,? said O'Hara Stephenson.

The Dufferin County Canadian Black Association is also working on bring services directed specifically at youth within the community; creating a new scholarship for black students to support access to post-secondary schooling.

?Dufferin County also stepped up by expanding the existing Bill Hill scholarship to black students in Dufferin County,? she added.

Dufferin County has seen significant growth in its diverse population within the last half decade. O'Hara Stephenson says that without a ?central hub? for resources, they ?don't know what is happening with the black community,? which she notes restricts their knowledge on possible impacts such as COVID-19.

The DCCBA currently consists of a Board of Directors that include O'Hara Stephenson, Jhordane Stephenson, and Geer Harvey as well as a community outreach team consisting of Althea Casamento and Phil Dewar.

The organization is open to become a member, register your business or donate to support their work.

?Despite the name, Black Association, we are an inclusive organization,? said O'Hara Stephenson. ?We welcome anyone who would like to partner, who would like to support [us] and as we offer programs, it is inclusive for all parties.?

For more information about the Dufferin County Canadian Black Association, including their services and programs go to their website at www.dufferincountycba.org.