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Export date: Sat Oct 31 1:56:37 2026 / +0000 GMT

# Organizers deem Community Living?s Walk, Roll or Ride event an overwhelming success

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

About 100 people filled the streets of downtown Orangeville last week as Community Living Dufferin's rescheduled Inclusive Walk, Roll or Ride event brought residents together in celebration of inclusion, belonging and community spirit during Community Living Month.

Originally postponed by a week due to poor weather, the May 21 event saw participants gather at Rotary Park in Orangeville before making their way through the downtown core dressed in blue and green Community Living Dufferin gear. Participants carried signs spreading positive messages of inclusion.

Executive Director Diane Kite described the event as a success, bringing together individuals supported by the organization, staff, families and supporters.

?The community walk was a tremendous success this year,? she said. ?The event brought together individuals supported by Community Living Dufferin, staff, families and supporters in a meaningful and positive way. It was wonderful to see so many people come together to celebrate inclusion, community connection, and belonging during Community Living Month.?

Kite described the atmosphere as powerful, saying that the walk's family-friendly features appealed to everyone, not just those on the walk.

?The atmosphere throughout the event was energetic, welcoming, and full of community spirit,? she said. ?Duffy, our Community Living Dufferin mascot, was a huge hit with participants and members of the public alike.?

Kite estimated approximately 100 people took part throughout the event, creating what organizers called a visible and positive presence in the community while helping raise awareness for people with developmental disabilities.

As participants moved through downtown, organizers said members of the public responded enthusiastically, waving, honking their horns, and cheering on the walkers.

?Throughout the walk, community members waved, smiled, honked their horns, and cheered participants on in support,? Kite said. ?We were extremely pleased with the level of participation and support shown by the community. Having such a great number of participants helped create a visible and positive presence in the community.?

Although the walk had originally been planned to stop near Orangeville Town Hall to connect with local council members, organizers said municipal representatives and dignitaries were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts connected to the rescheduled date.

?While we were disappointed they could not join us, we appreciated the support and encouragement many community leaders expressed beforehand,? Kite said. ?We look forward to strengthening those connections and hopefully welcoming local representatives to future events alongside Duffy and our growing community participation.?

Following the strong turnout and public response, Kite said Community Living Dufferin plans to make the walk a yearly tradition.

?Based on the overwhelmingly positive response and successful turnout, we absolutely see this becoming an annual Community

Living Month event,? she said. ?The walk provided a wonderful opportunity to bring people together, raise awareness, celebrate inclusion, and strengthen community relationships.?

Kite continued, ?We believe events like this are an important reminder of the value of creating inclusive communities where everyone feels welcomed, respected, and connected.?

She added that more awareness campaigns, volunteer opportunities, fundraising events, and inclusive community activities are planned throughout the year as the organization continues to promote inclusion and community engagement across Dufferin County.

Community Living is always looking for contributions from the public, and anyone interested is encouraged to reach out.

?There are many ways for people to get involved and support Community Living Dufferin,? Kite said. ?Community members can participate in future events, volunteer their time, attend fundraising activities, make donations, advocate for inclusion, partner with us through local businesses or organizations, or simply help spread awareness about the importance of inclusive communities.

?Every contribution, whether through time, resources, or financial support, helps strengthen programs and opportunities for individuals supported by Community Living Dufferin,? she added.

With a successful walk behind them, Community Living continues to make a lasting impact on the community by advocating for and supporting people with disabilities.