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Shelburne Legion looks to rally community support after devastating fire in Horning Mills

Written By JOSHUA DRAKES

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Royal Canadian Legion is living up to its reputation for supporting the local community, rallying around a member and her family who are beginning the long road to recovery after a devastating house fire.

In late November, a blaze destroyed the shop and garage of a Horning Mills property, where Kathleen McCauley and her mother, Ruth, reside.

The outbuilding housed the family's winter firewood supply ? the primary source of heat for their home ? along with tools and equipment used to maintain the rural property. The loss left them scrambling to address immediate concerns while facing mounting long-term costs.

McCauley said the first priority was ensuring the family could continue heating their home through the winter months. With the help of a friend who donated materials and labour, a temporary structure was quickly built to store firewood, easing the most urgent pressure in the days following the fire.

However, the destruction of the garage left behind extensive debris and the loss of essential equipment. Cleanup and removal costs, along with the need to replace tools and supplies, have created an ongoing financial strain.

Compounding the challenge is the fact that the property, which belongs to Ruth, was not insured. Ruth has been unable to work for several years due to health reasons, leaving the family to shoulder the full cost of recovery.

McCauley, who has been a proud member of the community since moving to Hornings Mills in 1988, has long been involved in local volunteer efforts, including with Royal Canadian Legion Branch 220 in Shelburne.

Known for supporting veterans and community initiatives, the Legion is now turning that support toward one of its own.

After fellow members approached McCauley about organizing a fundraiser, plans quickly took shape for a Team Dart Fundraiser at the branch.

In addition, friends and supporters launched a GoFundMe campaign to help offset the growing expenses associated with the fire and rebuilding efforts. The online fundraiser aims to cover cleanup costs, debris removal, and the replacement of critical tools and equipment lost in the blaze.

The dart tournament will be held on Saturday, March 7, at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 220 in Shelburne. Registration opens at 9 a.m., with play beginning at 10 a.m.

The event will accommodate up to 40 teams. Participants are asked to register in teams of four at a cost of $80 per team. Organizers say the goal is to combine friendly competition with community spirit, raising funds while bringing people together in support of the family.

Cash prizes will be awarded to the top three teams, and a 50/50 draw will also be held. Additional prizes will be available throughout the day.

The Legion's canteen will be open, and a cash bar will be available during the tournament.

Teams are encouraged to register and pay in advance by emailing rclbr220secretary@gmail.com to secure a spot. The GoFundMe can be found at gofund.me/de3ace14c.

With both the in-person fundraiser and the online campaign underway, organizers are hopeful the broader community will once again demonstrate the generosity that has long defined Dufferin County, helping a local family rebuild after an unexpected and overwhelming loss.