

Community groups celebrate United Way's support



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By Nate Smelle

For more than 60 years the United Way of Hastings and Prince Edward counties have been supporting a long list of community organizations in North Hastings. Bundled up in winter attire, a crowd of 30-plus supporters gathered atop the Eagles Nest in Bancroft on Thursday, Oct. 25 to show their appreciation for the United Way's contribution to the community.

Most of those in attendance were volunteers with the four organizations hosting the event ? North Hastings Community Trust, North Hastings Children Services, North Hastings Community Cupboard and the Bancroft Community Transit.

North Hastings Community Trust's executive director Jane Kali expressed her gratitude for the support United Way. She said a great deal of the work the Trust does to alleviate poverty and empower communities in North Hastings would not be possible without the funding provided by the United Way.

?The funding the United Way provides the Trust, as well as other agencies in North Hastings goes directly into our community,? said Kali.

?This is a way to celebrate and raise awareness of that work that wouldn't be possible in the community without the United Way's funding, and how important that funding is to help build the capacity of our community to address issues around poverty.?

Noting how effective the relationship between the Trust and the United Way continues to be in terms of fighting poverty, Kali said they have been very supportive beyond the core funding they provide. For instance, she said they have helped the Trust's board and staff develop a three-year strategic plan, provided capacity funding for systems improvements and paid for anti-oppression work in 2017.

The celebration also featured a guided Indigenous history and medicinal plant tour by Algonquin Inodewiziwin EarlyON Centre co-ordinator, Christine Luckasavitch. Participants in the walk collected more than \$1,500 to help the United Way reach its fundraising goal of \$2 million for 2018.

United Way of Hastings and Prince Edward counties' executive director Kathy Murphy moved to Belleville from Nova Scotia two years ago to work with the organization. Since then, she has seen first-hand how each of the organizations hosting the event is making a difference by improving the quality of life for people in North Hastings.

?Their support is huge to the community and the well-being of the area,? said Murphy.

?We want to raise more and more money, and we want to make sure that people understand the stories of impact, and lives changed. People's stories are very helpful when we are running the campaign, so we ask if people are willing to provide a testimonial that helps us go out into the workplaces and say this is what your donations are doing.?

?It really is about the people and the lives changed. We often say what would the community look like without the work of the United Way,? Murphy said.

According to Murphy, the United Way will be accepting requests for investments from eligible organizations serving Hastings and

Prince Edward counties between Oct. 24 and Dec. 10. She said proposals must address at least one of United Way's three priority pillars. Murphy indicated that these priority areas include: helping kids be all that they can be, moving people from poverty to possibility, and creating healthy strong communities.

To make the selection process fair, Murphy explained that all requests for investments that are complete and submitted on time will be reviewed by United Way HPE staff before being forwarded to a citizen review committee. She said the board of directors at United Way HPE will give the final approval of all funding decisions and reserves the right to reject any proposals. Murphy said they are looking forward to receiving submissions and supporting new and unique ideas that will create more capacity for the people who are most vulnerable in the community.

?There are many charities that are as worthy as the United Way, but the United Way is covering the programs and services that are available to those who are most vulnerable in the community,? said Murphy.

?That's the group of people we don't want to see left behind. Any of us could be in that situation at any time. It could be a health issue, it could be losing your job, getting a divorce, or being bullied at school as a child. These are things that could happen to any of us at any time, so these are the programs that are really changing lives.?

For more information on the United Way in Hastings and Prince Edward counties visit www.unitedwayhpe.ca.