

North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery dinner and auction returns after three year hiatus



By Bill Kilpatrick

Over 280 people packed into the Bancroft Curling Club on July 15 to help raise money for the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery who held their first in-person dinner and live auction since 2019. Those in attendance were treated to games, a 50/50 draw, drinks, a silent and live auction along with a special meal consisting of fried Lake Erie pickerel, potatoes, vegetables, pork, and two curry dishes from the Curry House. The meal was completed with an apple crisp dessert topped with ice cream. Over 40 volunteers from the community helped organize, set up, and serve the dinner along with volunteers from the Bancroft Curling Club. There were over 78 lots of items that were donated for the silent auction from individuals and businesses throughout the community along with 23 lots for the live auction. The live auction was hosted by Paul Switzer of Switzer's Auctions Services who offered his services for no charge. The funds raised at the dinner and auction go to assisting the day-to-day operations of the hatchery and thanks to the generosity of the community this year's dinner and auction raised over \$20,000.

Kevin Vance, the president of the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery, was ecstatic to have the in-person dinner and auction after a three year hiatus. The funds raised at the annual dinner prior to the COVID-19 pandemic took care of a large portion of the operating costs for the hatchery and when the pandemic hit the hatchery went to hosting an online auction, but it was not nearly as successful. The last three years, says Vance, "have been very difficult, but thankfully we've had some donations and we had to use money from our savings to pay the bills." John Vanderpas, a volunteer with the hatchery, was also happy to see the fundraiser return stating, "It was overwhelming to see the support that the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery still has from this community as we continue to put local fish in our local lakes." Vanderpas added that he would like to thank everyone on the organizing committee, the Bancroft Curling Club, the volunteers, and the community for all their continued support.

The North Hastings Fish Hatchery has been in operation since 2008 and was created in response to the declining trout stocks in local lakes. The hatchery has been raising, what their webpage calls, a "unique local strain of Lake Trout named the 'jewel'", but they have also expanded into raising lake trout and brown trout. According to the Bancroft and District Stocking List 2017-2021, produced by the Ministry of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources, and Forestry, "Bancroft District is the most intensively stocked Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources, and Forestry District in Ontario." In order to support various angling opportunities and rehabilitation efforts for natural fish species the ministry relies on two fish hatcheries, the Haliburton Highlands Outdoors Association and the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery and the many volunteers that run those hatcheries. Over the years the North Hastings Hatchery has helped stock hundreds of lakes with thousands of fish with a crew of

approximately 20 volunteers.

For those who would like more information on the North Hastings Fish Hatchery and how to get involved as a volunteer visit their webpage at www.fishhatchery.ca .