

WoodShare to hold first Woodstack Music Festival fundraiser



By Bill Kilpatrick

WoodShare, a local organization that provides emergency firewood to those in need throughout North Hastings, are holding their first fundraising concert called Woodstack, a play on the 1969 Woodstock concert. The fundraiser will be held on June 28 at Millennium Park from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. The musical lineup includes the Salt Cellars at 1 p.m., John Foreman at 2 p.m., Hanagraf at 3 p.m., Living Water at 4 p.m., Rick Houlton and others at 5 p.m., and Gioia and the Boyz at 7 p.m. There will be a 50/50 draw, a raffle for a truck load of wood, a silent auction, vendors, and more. Bancroft This Week sat down with the chair of WoodShare, Larry Edgar, to learn more about how WoodShare functions and why they are doing this fundraiser.

The purpose of the fundraiser, explained Edgar, is multifaceted. Not only will the money raised go to things like paying for insurance and gas cards for their volunteers, but the committee is also looking to build five more "wood cribs" that are used to store and dry the firewood. The goal is to ensure that their operation is efficient. "The more efficient, the less physically demanding," stated Edgar. Currently the group has one wood crib, but over the next five years they are hoping to add another five for a total of six.

Previously the group had to process the wood and stack it into long rows to dry. This was quite physically demanding work for the group, especially during the winter months, when they had to dig the wood out when a call came in for firewood. The wood cribs allow the group to have the processed wood dumped directly into the wood crib using a log processor where it is covered and can dry without the group having to stack it into rows. However, one wood crib only allows them to store one third of a year's worth of wood, so they still have to stack and cover the remaining two-thirds. The hope, said Edgar, was to eventually have two years' worth of wood stored in the six wood cribs.

While getting funds for the operation is an important aspect of the fundraiser, there was another aspect that was just as important which is having enough volunteers to run the multiple operations. "We have committed people," said Edgar, "[but] we're aging out," meaning that they require younger volunteers to do the physically demanding work. The concert is not only a chance to raise funds but also raise awareness of their need for volunteers.

Edgar explained that there are essentially three operations that are often running simultaneously that require volunteers. The first is the delivery of the wood to those who need it. This requires volunteers to be available within a day or two's notice to deliver the wood after an emergency call comes in. Once the group receives a call, another member reaches out to the volunteer pool to see who has the resources and time to deliver the wood. Members have to have access to a truck and need to be able to load and unload a truck load of wood during the same day. Edgar said that the group prefers to have at least two members go out on a delivery, but often due to a lack of volunteers, many times a single volunteer has to make the delivery. This can be quite difficult especially if the volunteer has to single-handedly dig a trail through the snow to the wood, dig the wood out, load the wood, and then unload it too. "We don't want to burn out our volunteers," said Edgar.

Another operation that often, but not always occurs during the summer months, is the processing of the wood which includes, using the log processor, stacking the wood, tarping the wood, and keeping the site organized. This aspect almost always involves a work bee Edgar explained. The group will give notice about the work that needs to be done and often, but not always, they are able to organize a large group of people to help out. Previously WoodShare was using students from the Northern Outdoors Studies program at the high school, but with the elimination of that program it's been hard to recruit younger volunteers. Edgar said that former educator Rod Moffitt has occasionally stepped up to help organize up to 15 youth for the work bees. Edgar further added that during the summer months it's often easier to find volunteers since the youth are not in school, but it is during the winter months that volunteers are most needed.

The last operation is the job of ensuring that the WoodShare work site is always accessible and always organized. According to Edgar this involves clearing snow, by hand, ATV, truck, or sometimes using a loader from Freymond Lumber, depending the size of the snow fall. This means that the volunteers have to be constantly checking on the work site, ensuring the lock is not frozen, and organizing snow removal. This can also involve re-tarping the wood when needed and weed whacking during the summer months. ?We are asking for people to step forward and become volunteers. We need younger people to keep this whole thing operational,? explained Edgar. Currently the group is looking for donations for the silent auction and raffle. For more information on the Woodstack concert, to volunteer, or to make a donation for the silent auction or raffle contact Larry Edgar at 613-332-1480.