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Ugly Christmas Sweater party supported Inn from the Cold

As Christmas approaches I wanted to take a moment to say a personal Thank You to everyone who supported and/or attended this year's second annual J & B's Ugly Christmas Sweater Party, which was held on Saturday December 8 at the Market Brewing Company in Newmarket.

The fundraising party was held in aid of the local charity, Inn from The Cold, who are always so grateful for the community's support, which helps them continue to help those most in need of urgent shelter and care throughout the year.

During the coldest season of the year, that support and help is especially welcomed and will continue to be much needed as we head into 2019 and beyond.

Last year, I was privileged to be invited, as part of the organizing committee, to help as the team handed over the proceeds of the previous party.

While at the ?Inn? I met with some of the clients who had shown up to take overnight shelter at the premises used by Inn From the Cold. The men and women I met were so very grateful, and told me a little bit about their stories and wanted me to pass along their ?thank you? to everyone.

In addition to the organizing team of volunteers who organised and ran the recent event, staff from Inn From The Cold were also working/volunteering all evening, and were at the door greeting guests and helping to run some fun and entertaining games which were held throughout the night.

Special thanks go to all the businesses and individuals who donated to the event and also provided items to the silent auction.

This year's donors included the Town of Aurora, Upper Canada Mall, Box Office Movies, Aurora Soccer Club, York FC 9, as well as players from the Toronto Maple Leafs & TFC who signed jerseys.

It was great to see Newmarket Councillor Jane Twinney bringing a few words of greeting from the Town of Newmarket and Aurora Councillor John Gallo and his wife Anita were also in attendance representing the Town of Aurora. They were each wearing their festive sweaters

Thank you to Rachel Bickley and Christine Melnik for working so hard to decorate the Market Brewing Company venue, and for spending time seeking and gathering donated items for the auction. Extra thanks to Rachel and her team for setting up and running the silent auction on the day.

As many residents have now sadly been informed, John Abel, Aurora's Deputy Mayor for the past eight years, died suddenly, just days before the event.

What many may not know is that on November 28 (apparently it was also John's birthday that day), John had purchased four tickets to support the event. He did that even though he knew he couldn't attend because his wife Tracy's company Christmas party was being held on the same night as the fundraiser.

That didn't stop John from helping. In the last text message he sent to me, he sent his regrets and explained he'd just that morning purchased four tickets as a donation, adding at the end of his message, ?I would love to attend, I have the perfect sweater. Great cause, great venue, I know I would have a fabulous time.?

His generosity in doing that will always remain as my final memory of John and his commitment to help others in need.

Finally, a big thank you to Jordon Bickley and our son, Brian Morris, Jr., of Lighthouse Legal Services for coming up with the idea to host this annual event and for leading the fundraising Organizing Team again this year.

The live band, The Focklers, were exceptionally good and the food that was on sale during the evening was very tasty.

This year's ugly sweaters were even more fabulous and extremely festive and creative. Some outfits were really too beautiful to be called ugly.

And the winner of the best outfit this year was Jordan's mom!

The applause brought the house down. Her sweater was decorated as a fireplace, complete with mantle and a string of Christmas stockings hanging directly over a glowing fireplace operated on a laptop (stitched into her sweater). Very creative. A worthy winner.

The party was a great team effort for a great cause.

Jordan and Brian will be announcing the total amount raised as soon as everything's been collected with any late donations included.

If you couldn't join us this year, we hope you can be there in 2019. It's promising to be more fun than ever as word spreads.

Merry Christmas, everyone, and health, peace and happiness in the New Year.

Phyllis Morris

Aurora