

?An artist who no longer creates is just an artist in suspended animation waiting to become irrelevant?



By Brock Weir

Over a dozen kids spent seven days last month out in the wilderness reconnecting with nature ? and themselves. They went back to basics as part of a ?Grief Busters? program, an initiative of Hope House ? formerly Hospice King Aurora Richmond Hill ? to support youngsters who are dealing with the death of a parent, grandparent or sibling. The kids set out with three facilitators and four teen buddies for the formative experience, which Heidi Bonner, Executive Director of Hope House Hospice says is a phenomenal experience all around. ?We just finished our summer program and it is an amazing camp,? she says. ?The way kids support each other is just really amazing and inspiring.?

Programs like these, as essential as they are, however, can only happen through the generosity of the community. As such, Hope House is gearing up once again for their Jitterbug Ball, Hope House's largest fundraiser, which is held every two years.

Set to take place Friday, October 12, at Hazelton Manor in Vaughan, the Jitterbug Ball got a welcome financial shot in the arm by RBC last week, presented by local bank manager Paola Luchenski.

?The Jitterbug Ball supports our events over two years and all of our programs are available at no cost to our clients,? says Ms. Bonner. ?The Ball is very important for raising funds to cover the cost of programs. Hope House has been in operation for 35 years and we now serve the communities of King Township, Aurora and Richmond Hill, so this event is really important in terms of raising funds to support us ? and it is a fun event too!?

Bringing the fun to the dance floor this year is Side 3, a six-member band dedicated to using its collective talent for event fundraising and philanthropy. The entertainment will be emceed by John Derringer and features a live auction with a host of exciting items up for bids ranging from a box at a Blue Jays game, to trip packages to Brazil, Uruguay, Turks & Caicos and more. Teresa Van Schaik, this year's Jitterbug Ball co-chair, says this event is ?not your typical Ball? where people go in, donate their money to the worthy cause of the evening, before leaving at 9 p.m.

?It is a fantastic dance, and it is a community thing,? says Ms. Van Schaik. ?It will be quite fabulous and we also have a few surprises set for the evening.?

Ms. Van Schaik knows the importance of hospice care all too well. A member of the Hope House board, she and her family have personally taken care of parents and other loved ones in the last stages of their lives.

?Hospice is really important not only for the person being cared for, but the person who is taking care of them,? she says. ?It is time consuming and when you have an organization that can come in and just give you a bit of relief and comfort, it makes a huge difference.?

When she first decided to volunteer her time for Hope House, when it was still Hospice King Aurora, she was struck particularly by the programs they provide for children dealing with bereavement.

“People think hospice is only for the dying people, and it is not,” she says. “It is for people who have illnesses and just need assistance. A lot of times they don't understand that we're not a residential hospice. We deal with people for a year, two years, on a weekly basis. We are a community hospice that goes out to anybody anywhere. Even though we're just King, Aurora and Richmond Hill, we have gone out of our scope to help anybody, and we can direct them to the right place.”

Although the Jitterbug Ball is currently hosted in Vaughan, organizers hope that now that adequately-sized banquet facilities are available in Aurora, they can once again host the future balls on home turf, underscoring the community aspect of Aurora, King and Richmond Hill's community hospice.

“This is a really fun event and there are opportunities to support us in different ways,” says Bonner. “And, it supports a really good cause. The thing I like best is the energy in the room. There is an energy you don't get at every event and it is nice to be a part of that. It is the result of thousands of hours of volunteer contributions and that makes me feel good not only to be a part of that, but to see the end result.”

The Jitterbug Ball in support of Hope House Community Hospice, takes place Friday, October 12, at Hazelton Manor (99 Peelard Road). Doors open at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$200 each, or \$2,000 for a table of ten. For more information, including tickets and sponsorship opportunities, call 905-727-6815 x22 or visit www.hopehousehospice.com/jitterbug-ball-2018-new.