

Canadian Federation of University women boosts scholarships for students



The Canadian Federation of University Women has been promoting education in Aurora and Newmarket for more than 65 years, and now as so many things continue to become less affordable, members and businesses are stepping up to ensure that local women, young or mature, meet their educational goals.

The Federation (CFUW) previously gave out scholarships of \$1,000 or \$1,500 to worthy and in-need applicants throughout northern York Region. But, in light of the times, they have upped this figure to \$2,500.

‘With today’s rising costs and also with challenges of recession and rising economic issues as a result of the pandemic and everything else, we’ve made a decision to increase our award amount,’ said CFUW Aurora-Newmarket’s Pam Jones, Co-Chair of the group’s Awards Committee.

Jones says in addition to handing out scholarships to area students coming out of secondary school in both publicly-funded local school boards, an additional annual scholarship is awarded to a recipient from the Children’s Aid Society and Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers, among other community organizations.

‘That helps a young woman who has some challenges and is getting back to pursue their education,’ Jones continues, adding that a further scholarship is earmarked for Indigenous students. ‘Our Awards Committee sits down in April or May each year and goes through all the applications with a set of criteria to provide a fair and equitable way of selecting the worthiest candidates. It’s events like our Home & Garden Tour and especially members of the community like Deb Clark who have enabled us to increase the number of awards and the amount of the awards given.’

Becoming involved with the CFUW was a natural fit for Clark, who owns and operates Oakridge’s Fashions in the heart of Aurora’s historic downtown core.

The Federation first came to Clark’s attention last year at a fashion show. When she talked to organizers, she says she was ‘just struck by the fellowship, by the interest that these women all had in one another,’ and particularly ‘one of their key goals being the support of education and women of all ages.’

‘It resonated with me and it certainly matched up to the kinds of values Oakridge’s Fashions has,’ said Clark, who donated \$500 to the cause last month. ‘We want to be very involved in supporting the community in which we do our work. We support lots of organizations, but I couldn’t miss the connectivity of this organization with its focus on women and my business and its focus on women.’

The educational component of the CFUW was also a key draw for Flavia Cantarutti, President of the CFUW Charitable Trust Aurora-Newmarket.

“For me, it was a long career of 37 years in banking that I was so fortunate and blessed to be given the chance to hone some skills and competencies for me to give back when I was retired and I honestly wanted to hold a position, whether it be on the club side or the trust side, to give back and, for me, education is a huge thing.

“I am the first generation of my family to go to university with immigrant parents who worked very hard and wanted to see their children go to school. I saw the difference that made in order to open doors for me when I was working in my career and just in general; the doors opened for me because I was able to have that education behind me and that was very, very important.”

The Canadian Federation of University Women was established in Aurora and Newmarket in 1957 and is a non-partisan, self-funded organization that works to improve the status of women and promote human rights, public education, social justice and peace.

The nation-wide organization was founded in 1919 and now has over 100 clubs across Canada, bringing together more than 8,000 members.

“There is this wonderful opportunity [to further] financial assistance to deserving recipients to further their education and I love that,” says Clark. “I hope this brings even a few more folks to understand that major huge awards are so competitive that they land in the hands of very few students; awards of this scale are so essential [to] have that boost up from what they and their parents have been able to save.

“I think support also goes beyond finances. There is mentorship here [with the CFUW]. There's generations of women and a wealth of knowledge and experience.”

For more information about the CFUW, visit www.cfuwaauroraneumarket.com.

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