

Four Aurora families to benefit from donation to Alzheimer Society



By Brock Weir

Sylvia Hussey has been down this road before.

When her elderly mother began losing her memory, the Aurora resident was left as her primary caregiver.

Working through her struggles, Ms. Hussey found a welcome respite in the D.A.Y. Program offered by the Alzheimer Society of York Region. It was a great program, one which offered care, friendship, and fun programs to exercise the mind.

Years after her mother died at the grand age of 96, however, Ms. Hussey is once again turning to the program as her husband now battles dementia at a comparatively early age.

"My husband has been going there for about two years now and really enjoys it," she says. "They have coffee, exercises, do great activities, have lunch, and many of the [staff] have been there for years."

Ms. Hussey's husband typically attends the programs on Mondays and Thursdays, but just before The Auroran spoke to her, they had worked in an extra day to help care for him as she tended to another commitment which could not be avoided.

"It is great because it is hard to be here with them all the time," she says. "You can do things like go shopping, but when I had to go to a funeral, I just called up the girls and asked if it would be okay and it was."

The D.A.Y. Program, which stands for "Day Centre for Alzheimer's in York Region", got a very welcome boost on Friday morning, receiving a cheque of \$5,000 as part of the proceeds raised in last year's Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament.

The money will be used to help offset the cost for four families in Aurora grappling with Alzheimer's disease to take part in the programs.

According to statistics released by the Alzheimer Society of York Region, nearly 300,000 Ontarians over the age of 65, or one in ten, are now living with the disease, a marked increase of 16 per cent over the past four years. In York Region alone, over 2,000 families are supported by the Society.

The funds will be used to help support low-income residents of Aurora who need access to the service to do so without the impact of the cost," says Loren Freid, Executive Director of the Alzheimer Society of York Region. "There is a cost for clients to use our day programs, \$20 a day, but it is on a sliding scale, so the cost isn't necessarily an impediment to our service. If someone needs to come

in and can't afford to pay the \$20 a day, the funds from this golf tournament are used to provide a subsidy.

?It provides a service to the caregiver, providing them with the respite, to give the caregiver the opportunity to go out and shop and other necessary services that the caregiver would not be able to do. The D.A.Y. program is also a benefit to the person with dementia because it provides physical and mental stimulation. It is a great social environment for the person with the disease, helps keep them vibrant and active in the community, and it is believed that activities such as this go a long way in helping mitigate the progression of the disease process. It is a great place for people to go.?

Ms. Hussey is in agreement with this assessment.

?There is a benefit just being with other people, and not just being cooped up in a condo,? she says. ?I think being with other people just helps them a lot. People are talking about [dementia] more because there is a lot more of it around and being able to talk about it is a good thing.?