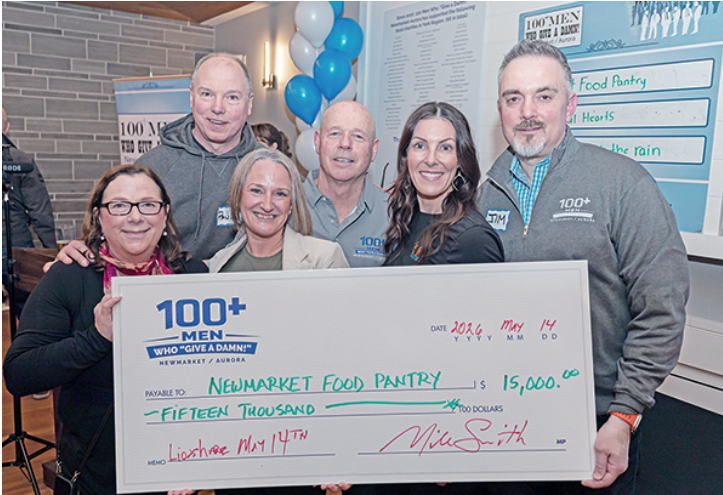


## 100+ Men Who Give a Damn benevolent club celebrates 10th anniversary with \$15K donation to Newmarket Food Pantry



100+ Men Who Give a Damn celebrated their tenth anniversary of community benevolence on Thursday evening at Stonehaven Banquet Hall.

President Mike Smith welcomed more than 150 attendees, including 132 current members, to the society's quarterly gathering.

Three local charities—Newmarket Food Pantry, Peaceful Hearts, and Shine Through the Rain—delivered presentations to the donors.

After listening to the charity reps' pitches, it was decided through a club vote that Newmarket Food Pantry would receive the lion's share—consisting of a \$15,000 donation.

Peaceful Hearts and Shine Through the Rain received \$1,500 each.

Newmarket Food Pantry representative Erin Cartwright expressed her appreciation towards 100+ Men for the organization's timely monetary support.

“We live in a generous community. With these funds, we can ensure that our purchasing power for needed items remains strong. It's going to give us funds we need to make sure our shelves are full. We're serving 55 families a day and providing food for over 3,000 individuals weekly. There's been a substantial increase in families who require our assistance.”

Cartwright's colleague Vanessa Gorgonio added a poignant statistic to our post-event discussion: “33% of our clients are children.”

In her presentation earlier in the evening, Gorgonio noted a recent run on breakfast foods at the Pantry.

“Our needs change on the fly. We recently did a food drive for cereal since our shelves were empty. Cereal's an important start to the day for so many kids. Hunger should never be part of childhood. You're not just making a donation tonight—you're offering stability and hope. Thanks for choosing to care. We're just not fighting hunger—we're building community.”

In the Q and A session that followed their succinct presentation, Cartwright and Gorgonio cited some daunting statistics for the membership assembled at Stonehaven.

"We're serving 977 households and over 2,000 individuals a month. Donations are used to replenish staple items like pasta, rice, beans, and peanut butter. We're running out of these items more often now. We're experiencing a 138% increase in visits to the Pantry since 2020. Our staff of five and our 300 volunteers are very busy stocking shelves and making deliveries."

When asked which kinds of food the Pantry needs the most, Cartwright noted they are in constant need of five groups at the Newmarket hub.

"The first one would be peanut butter; secondly, pasta and meat sauce; third is tuna; fourth is baked beans without pork due to some of our clients' diet restrictions; and we always need coffee. In every donation we receive, we experience the power of community."

Concierge Realty Group's Wasim Jarrah, one of the sponsors of Thursday night's event, echoed Cartwright's emphatic points.

"By helping the most vulnerable in our communities, we're blessed to be able to help. What we've proven here tonight is that we've created a positive ripple effect by working together."

Working together has been a rallying cry during the organization's ten years of Giving a Damn.

Since 2016, "100+ Men" has donated to 66 local organizations and bestowed a total of \$370,000 to social agencies and registered charities in Newmarket and Aurora.

As part of the 10th anniversary celebrations, a series of videotaped testimonials from community organizations "including Hope House, Rose of Sharon, Deaf/Blind, and Bridge North" were presented to reinforce one of the emergent themes of the evening: "You give where you live."

President Mike Smith, whose company Smith Rogers Financial also sponsored the event, provided a concise "state-of-the-club" address and discussed the growth and good fortunes of the benevolent society.

"We're very lucky. We have businesses in town and money fixes a lot of things. If charities don't have money, they're stuck. For \$401 per year, including only \$1 per member for administration costs, we're able to distribute almost \$75,000 yearly to organizations in need in Aurora and Newmarket. We're up to 185 members and our goal is to get it to "200 Men that Give a Damn" by the end of the month. Our year-to-date donations are record-breaking."

Smith thanked Stonehaven for "donating the banquet hall tonight" and announced the society's next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 16 at the Hungry Brew Hops on Main Street in Newmarket "where we'll be getting back to our roots."

By Jim Stewart Local Journalism Initiative Reporter