

Big Brothers Big Sisters find silver lining at Emerald Hills



By Brock Weir

Every cloud has a silver lining, but those at Big Brothers Big Sisters of York could be forgiven if they looked at Maytime rain clouds with dismay as they opened up to wash their annual golf tournament away.

But they have regrouped, rescheduled, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of York (BBBSY) is looking to be back and bigger than ever next Tuesday as they aim to raise \$40,000 for local kids at their annual Golf for Kids' Sake and there is still time for you to gather up a foursome to help them hit their target.

"It was a really interesting time," says Sarah Dame, President and CEO of BBBSY of the previously scheduled day of the tourney when dark clouds loomed on the horizon signalling certain doom. "That morning we knew they had called for horrific weather but everything was ready to go."

Adds Rhonda Flanagan, BBBSY's Director of Resource Development: "Every time something like this happens, I always figure it happens for a reason and it should be an opportunity for us, we'll get a better day, and maybe even more golfers out. In July, people are on holidays, so they actually have time to come out whereas before they might have had other commitments in May."

Now, everything is back in place, the date is set, and the Pandora jewellery company is on board as a presenting sponsor.

BBBSY connected with Pandora through board member Angela Doan, a resident of Aurora.

In all, they have room for 144 golfers, and hole sponsorships remain ahead of the shotgun start at 1 p.m., a day which includes a lunch, 18 holes of championship golf, a gourmet dinner, and live and silent auctions.

"It is a lot of fun and it is a great event," says Ms. Dame. "Emerald Hills, which is a beautiful course, has welcomed us for three years and they do such a great job with the food, the setup, the welcome."

Most importantly, however, it is the 20th anniversary of Golf For Kids' Sake and, with that in mind, they are hoping they will surpass their target and every dollar counts as all the money raised will stay right here in the York Region community.

"I call it the power of an hour," says Ms. Flanagan, highlighting BBBSY's in-school mentorship programs which will be one of the myriad areas of BBBSY that will benefit from the \$40,000 fundraiser.

Adds Ms. Dame, "The money goes into where our program shortages are, which are right across the board. Obviously, our one-on-one mentoring and in-school mentoring, and community matches are our highest cost and that is where the money will flow, for sure. We're trying to build our in-school mentoring, which is where one-on-one mentoring takes place within the school where you can go in, be a mentor, and visit a child once a week."

Therein lies Ms. Flanagan's "power of the hour" because it might just be one hour, but, added up, it can make a world of difference. There are a variety of mentorship opportunities available, both close to home and close to your business for added convenience, all of which will benefit the children of York Region.

"People think it is hidden here," says Ms. Dame of the needs of our local kids. "People don't see our families in crisis here, but they are here and I can assure you that as our wait lists continue to grow and as we continue to have to turn families away because we don't have the resources or the human resources to serve them all, we live in a Region that has a million plus."

Ms. Flanagan adds that while the majority of children they serve are either from low-income and/or single-parent families, they also serve a number of newcomer families who are "struggling to adjust" to this country. "Everyone thinks it is not in their community but it absolutely is," she says. "Judging by our wait lists, it is in our community and it is only growing, so if you want to help kids locally, this is the tournament to do it."

For more information on Golf For Kids' Sake, visit www.bbbsy.ca/en/Home/events/golfforkidssake.aspx