

## ?Caring? women continue to raise tens of thousands for community

The pandemic has been a challenging time for everyone and there has been no shortage of ways that individuals and groups have found to lend a hand ? and throughout it all, whether in-person or virtual, 100 Women Who Care Central York Region hasn't let a few hurdles get in the way of making a difference.

The group, which was founded locally six years ago, continues to go from strength to strength, regularly raising more than \$10,000 every three months for community groups in need.

The concept of 100 Women Who Care is simple: all you need is \$100 in hand and 60 minutes of time. At each meeting, even in the virtual realm, participants donate \$100 to the cause and within that hour pitches are made by respective members on why that evening's pot should go one of up to three charities.

At the end of the hour, the vote is taken, and the largest vote-getting organization has thousands more to further their mission.

Among their members is realtor Kristina Wilton who first joined 100 Women Who Care (CYR) just after having her second child.

As a business owner, she was very busy but still wanted to find a way to give back to the community she calls home.

?A lot of other organizations require a lot of commitment and time and I was worried I would never be able to give back,? says Wilton. ?But I also wanted to be a part of something I knew is making a difference, especially in something local. Sometimes there are great charities I support, but they're not necessarily hyper-focused on our community.

?What attracted me to 100 Women CYR was the little commitment and the big impact because I think that is what everyone is worried about: commitment and not being able to really commit to something and give it that much time.?

Wilton says she knew the second she attended her first meeting that it was the right fit for her.

?The impact was immediate,? she says. ?We hear from two charities every evening and then we vote on the charities we feel need it the most at the time. The impact was noticed immediately because you hear firsthand from people at these charities what they're doing in the community, where the money is going to go, why they need it and what it is going to do for them.

?We were a little worried [virtual] wouldn't have the same impact or we would lose members. I think women sometimes had used it as their night out or their social thing, but we talked about it a lot when we were first pivoting to virtual: would we have the same impact? Would it be the same? It turns out it has actually been amazing. Life can be very busy and stressful; going virtual allows people such as myself to be on the road or to be somewhere else and still be able to plug in and not miss out. You always feel the momentum in the room; you feel the energy there, but how amazing it was to get off those virtual calls and still have the same feeling of being uplifted, that you're still having that same impact.?

100 Women CYR is following trends to determine when they might be able to resume in-person meetings. Not everyone is comfortable doing so just yet, says Wilton, and another challenge has been finding a venue that can accommodate such a large group with the restrictions of the day.

?We have only been holding back based on the restriction at this point in time,? she says. ?In the near future, we will be having a conversation about going back to in-person and that is happening very quickly. In the meantime, we're always reaching out to our communities to find local charities. Let us know about them and nominate them. You don't have to be a member of 100 Women Who Care to present; anybody can present these charities and we're always looking for them. You just have to reach out to a member or email us to let us know what the charity is and one of the committee members will present on their behalf.

?I think we're one of the most successful groups. We have maintained ourselves well, adding new members throughout the last two years and I would love to see us continue to grow. I would love to see us back together as a group just continuing to grow and raise awareness of what we're doing so we can continue to help on a larger scale.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter