

Dinner set to pay tribute to Queen's York Rangers' work at home



(Kimberley Kerr and Brian North are organizing next week's dinner in honour of the Queen's York Rangers.)

By Brock Weir

As Aurorans paused to remember the fallen at Remembrance Day observances this week, chances are the Queen's York Rangers, and their very active cadets, were very close at hand.

The Rangers have been a presence in Aurora for nearly as long as Aurora's existed. They have always been there to lend a hand within the community, but according to organizers of a special event next week, this element of their service may have become something this community has come to take for granted.

The work the Rangers do within Aurora, York Region, and nation-wide will take pride of place next Thursday, November 20 for 'O Canada: We stand on guard for thee', a fundraising dinner for the Queen's York Rangers' Regimental Assistance Fund.

This is the second-annual fundraiser being spearheaded by Brian North and Kimberley Kerr, two Aurora residents who have become actively involved in several Regimental events to boost community awareness and appreciation for local efforts.

"After we did last year's dinner focusing on the work they do overseas, the Queen's York Rangers came back to us and said, 'We do great stuff in Canada, so if you're going to do another dinner, can we focus on what we do in Canada?'" says Ms. Kerr. "It is very poignant now with all of the stuff that has been going on [in recent weeks] and we are going to focus on what the Rangers and the Cadets do in Canada.

"I knew they did all kinds of things in Canada, but I really didn't realise the extent," she adds of what they learned once they became more familiar with Regimental life. "They are on call for the defence of Canada. If Canada is ever in any trouble, the Queen's York Rangers are in line and fully trained to do everything. If a community in York Region has a missing child, someone who has gone missing, the Queen's York Rangers step up. They were on standby for the fires in British Columbia, they responded twice to floods in Manitoba, and responded to the Ottawa Ice Storm."

According to Ms. Kerr, the Regiment is enthusiastic about highlighting the training they do each Wednesday and Saturday here in

Canada, and particularly their efforts to serve York Region and the Greater Toronto area. While they visit schools year-round, they also serve as a very visible presence at this time of year at various Remembrance Day events, and provide invaluable opportunities for legions of cadets. Although this work is tireless, Ms. Kerr says it is work that is often underappreciated and undervalued by the community at large.

"These are highly trained, specialized people that are just top notch," says Ms. Kerr. "They are not camping in Sheppard's Bush, they are actually training really hard. I would be the first to say, "Man, if we're in any trouble, it's a Queen's York Ranger I'd like to have standing beside me."

Thursday's dinner will have plenty of the pomp and circumstance that traditionally comes with Queen's York Rangers events. Held at the Royal Canadian Legion, visitors will be greeted by tanks and Jeeps, and have a chance to get a handle on some of the guns and weapons typically used by the regiment. Rather than last year's mess-style dinner, this year's will be a sit down affair featuring interview-style conversations on stage of currently serving Rangers, who will be speaking about their training and experiences here on the home front.

Members of the public will also have the opportunity to sponsor a Queen's York Ranger to attend the dinner.

"For them to see the outreach of the community means a lot to them because I don't think they feel the pride that we have towards them," says Ms. Kerr. "For them to know they can come to a dinner complimentary, listen to all the conversations and be congratulated about their jobs, I think will be reciprocated. They have such a respect for the general public it is unbelievable. They are just wonderful people and I think the Town needs to know about that."

Tickets for "O Canada" are on sale now via Brian North at bnorth@ellisstudios.ca or through Ms. Kerr at rkkerr@rogers.com. They are \$60 per person and available only in advance. The event runs from 6 - 10 p.m., with dinner served at 6.40 p.m. Additional fundraising opportunities include a silent auction.

"The most important thing is after this event we can walk away and hear people in our community say, "The Queen's York Rangers are here, this is what they have done overseas and this is what they are doing in Canada,"" says Ms. Kerr. "That will be a big measure of success for us."