

Fashion show shines light on Elder Abuse



By Brock Weir

Local seniors have been hard at work this week getting catwalk-ready to raise awareness on a very important issue.

Hello Beautiful, a fashion show and silent auction in support of the Prevention of Elder Abuse Committee of York Region, will take place this Thursday, June 27, at Kingsway Place Retirement Residence.

Featuring a wine and cheese, silent auction, a 50/50 draw and more, the main event will be a fashion show modelled by residents, staff and the wider community of Kingsway Place.

Funds raised during the evening will help fund a new outreach position at the Committee, which aims to increase awareness and knowledge about resources with the aim of prevention and intervention of elder abuse.

?Statistics suggest that in Ontario there are between 32,000 and 160,000 older adults being abused,? says the Committee. ?The abusers are frequently family members, friends, neighbours or care providers; in short, people that the abused person knows. Abuse often occurs within the seniors' home or local community. It can also occur within institutional settings such as long-term care homes, retirement homes, seniors' group homes, private facilities or other institutions including hospitals or specialty care settings.

?Elder abuse often occurs when the abuser uses their position of power in a way that frightens or distresses the older person. This happens because the abuser wants to intimidate (terrorize), isolate (separate the individual from friends or family members), dominate (control, restrain), or extract financial gain. Older adults are often dependent on the abuser for some assistance such as grocery shopping, driving to appointments, helping with their banking, or general household duties. Dependency tends to increase the

risk of being victimized.?

As a former personal support worker, Kingsway Place's Valerie Bennett says she's no stranger to seeing the impacts elder abuse can have on the wider community, noting she saw financial abuse as a particularly prevalent problem. In her role at Kingsway Place, she has brought in members of the York Regional Police to raise awareness around these issues, particularly fraud as cases like so-called "romance scams" continue running rampant on social media.

"It is not going away and seniors are growing older and the population of seniors is getting larger," says Ms. Bennett. "Anybody I've mentioned Hello Beautiful to trying to sell tickets all say this is a really good cause" and our residents are getting a kick out of it. We plan to give them a framed picture of themselves in their outfits."

On Monday, staff and volunteers were busy at work hand-crafting decorations for Thursday's catwalk, including hanging decorations in Kingsway's signature colours of purple and teal.

Energy is high, and now all people need to do is show up and support the cause.

Events get underway with a formal welcome from 5.30 - 6 p.m., followed from 6 - 7 p.m. with a wine and cheese and silent auction, before the fashion show itself kicks off at 7 p.m.

Tickers are \$25 per guest and available for purchase at Kingsway Place Residence (Murray Drive, Aurora - 905-841-2777 x229), from the Memories Plus Adult Program & Wellness Centre (905-270-2524) or online from eventbrite.ca/e/hello-beautiful-tickets-60428084026.