

Food insecurity, homeless and youth to benefit from Hoedown foundation

It might be another year before York Region residents can let out their 'yee-haw' once again at the Magna Hoedown, but more than 30 community groups have been left cheering after being named 2022's recipients of the Magna Hoedown Foundation.

This 2022 Magna Hoedown, York Region's biggest party that has benefited countless local non-profits over the past three decades, was cancelled for the third year running this spring due to the global pandemic.

But that doesn't mean local charities will be going without. Once again, in lieu of the party, Magna established the Hoedown Community Fund, which has set aside \$500,000, which will be shared 30 community groups and teams of community groups.

This year's recipients are:

- Aurora Football Club- Autism Ontario- Big Brothers Big Sisters of York- Blue Door Shelters- CAYR Community Connections- Cornerstone to Recovery- Diabetes Canada- House on the Hill- Hope House & Hill House Hospice- Jericho Youth Services- Kerry's Place Autism Services- NACCA (Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association)- Newmarket Food Pantry- Newmarket Jets- Ontario SPCA and Humane Society- Optimist Clubs of York Region- Shendery Gymnastics Studio- Routes Connecting Communities- The ABLE Network- Walk It Off Spinal Cord Recovery and Wellness Centre- Abuse Hurts- Aurora Tigers- Learning Disabilities Association of York Region- Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers- St. John Ambulance- The Salvation Army- Victim Services of York Region- Women's Centre of York Region- Welcoming Arms- York Region Food Network

'Magna is committed to supporting organizations who provide critical services to our communities,' said Aaron McCarthy, Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer for Magna, in a statement. 'I am proud to once again launch our Magna Hoedown Community Fund, which will benefit 30 local charities and over 150,000 residents in York Region.'

'I would also like to thank the charities, volunteers, and our loyal Hoedown supporters for all you do to help us build better communities together.'

While some of the recipient organizations will use their funds to keep existing programs and services running, others will use their share of the pot to steer new initiatives in the community.

The Aurora Football Club, for instance, will use their proceeds to further free special needs indoor and outdoor programs, the development and certification of volunteer coaches, and to support equipment and facility fees.

Virtual and in-person summer camp programs hosted by Autism Ontario Central East will benefit from the Hoedown Community Fund, supporting programs for children, youth and adults with ASD.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of York will put their money towards tackling an ever-growing waitlist for group mentoring programs, which 'provide impactful mentoring relationships to individuals from lone parent to low-income families.'

A 'First For Youth' program will be funded through Blue Door Shelter's share of the proceeds. The program will focus on tackling youth homelessness across York Region, a community in which an estimated 1,500 people experience homelessness, 25 per cent of which are youth, according to Blue Door statistics.

The Newmarket African Caribbean Canadian Association will use their funds to 'deliver important programming like food security, mental health education and support, and resisting anti-Black racism education and resources to the community at large.'

Food insecurity will also be addressed through the shares received by Welcoming Arms and the York Region Food Network.

Welcoming Arms says their proceeds will help feed over 250 neighbours in need each week while the Food Network will focus on improving access to fresh food through a revitalization of their gleaning program, which will put fresh, harvested produce in to the hands of people who need it most.

Similarly, the Optimist Clubs of York Region (Aurora, Newmarket, Richmond Hill and Keswick) will collaborate on expanding their school breakfast clubs and food pantry programs which they say have been drastically impacted by the pandemic.

For more on the Magna Hoedown Community Fund, including this year's recipients and how to support the organizations yourself, visit hoedown.ca.

By Brock Weir
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