

Girls? empowerment hits the road with help from the Province



Girls Inc. of York Region is driven to empower young women in our community ? and now they're able to do so quite literally thanks to a financial infusion from the Ontario Government.

The Aurora-based organization celebrated the receipt of a \$75,600 grant from the Provincial government on August 13 with Newmarket-Aurora MPP Dawn Gallagher Murphy at Newmarket's Poplar Bank Public School.

The non-profit has used the grant to secure a 15-person van, painted in the vivid red that has become Girls Inc.'s trademark, which will help them connect even more teens with opportunities in the community and Greater Toronto Area.

?I want to start by recognizing the exceptional leadership of Barb Wallace and the entire team at Girls Inc. of York Region. Your unwavering dedication to empowering young girls is shaping brighter futures across our Region,? said MPP Gallagher Murphy. ?The Ontario Government has awarded Girls Inc. of York Region a capital grant of \$75,600 through the Ontario Trillium Foundation. We knew the funding was going to support the purchase of a large 15-passenger van as well as tablets and laptops ? vital tools that will help enhance the delivery of year-round programs and help Girls Inc. reach and connect with more girls across York Region.

?Programs like Sporting Chance, Project Bold, Operation Smart, and the Mental Health Support Program do more than just teach skills. They create spaces where girls can thrive, explore their potential, and prepare for meaningful futures?. I want to thank everyone at Girls Inc. of York Region for their dedication and their unwavering commitment to the rights [and] the well-being of girls in our community. This funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation will strengthen your ability to reach more young women, expand your programs, and continue empowering girls to reach their full potential. Together, we can build a future where every girl has the confidence, skills, and support to shape their own path and make a positive impact in our society.?

Executive Director Wallace said the new vehicle will help get their teens to activities and programs they otherwise wouldn't be able to do.

One past example she cited was receiving a call from a benefactor offering Girls Inc. 15 tickets to a Jonas Brothers concert. It was a great offer, but the logistics in making it happen were something of a challenge.

?Having the van, we can put a call out and say, ?Come with your parent' and off we go, or be able to take a smaller group down to one of our corporate partners for a visit,? she told The Auroran. ?We work closely with Benefit Cosmetics at their offices in Toronto and to be able to put some teens on the van, get down there, and have some time to do some mentoring and learn about the cosmetics industry? we have worked with American Express in Markham, the local York Regional Police department, and some really great businesses, and this is our chance to be able to get the girls there and back in a safe way.?

Another benefit of the vehicle is helping pick up donations received during the holiday season ? including the generosity of CHUM Christmas Wish ? and to distribute them as well.

?We are so honoured and excited to accept this grant to get this incredible van that we're going to be already talking to the girls, planning some activities, being able to take them to the beach, to go rock climbing, to go to Toronto, take small groups of girls to visit businesses and learn about what they do to inspire them to stay in school, study those hard subjects, and be strong, smart, and bold,? said Wallace, addressing MPP Gallagher Murphy. ?And we couldn't have done it without the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, with Dawn herself being in our corner.?

Added the MPP: ?Seeing this van and seeing these beautiful young ladies and what they're going to be able to do and how they'll be able to get around in style, it's amazing. I wish the girls an amazing time with Girls Inc. You will definitely flourish, I know. Thank you, Barb, once again for everything that you do.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter