

Girls Inc. of York Region finds new home in Aurora

Girls Inc. of York Region, the venerable organization that has aimed to empower young women for more than a century, has found a new home in Aurora.

Long based in Newmarket, the non-profit organization has relocated to a converted house on Wellington Street East, just west of Industrial Parkway, and aims to bring further programs and volunteer opportunities to the community.

"We have been in Newmarket for quite a while, but our landlord sold our building on the up and up and gave us lots of notice and we have been able to secure a location on Wellington," says Barbara Wallace, Executive Director of Girls Inc. of York Region. "It's now fully renovated into offices with great parking, great location across from the GO Station, and that's where our operations will take place.

"Our goal is to run the programs in the community. We're in all areas of York Region, including up to Georgina Island running programs for girls in school, out of school, weekends, evenings. You name it, we're doing it."

Girls Inc. of York Region runs programs in more than 35 schools across York Region, reaching well over 4,000 young women and girls in the wider community each year.

Girls Inc. was founded in the United States in 1864 to serve girls and young women impacted by the American Civil War.

Its mission quickly spread throughout North America and while its programs have evolved over the years, they are united by the mission of empowerment.

"By offering evidence-based programs in a safe, pro-girl environment, Girls Inc. of York Region inspires all girls to be Strong, Smart, and Bold," reads the group's mission statement. "We are champions for the rights and well-being of all girls while focusing on the needs of those from vulnerable communities.

"Girls Inc. of York Region empowers girls to discover their inherent strengths and grow up to be healthy, educated and independent."

Girls Inc. of York Region has, in recent years, grown from a full-time staff complement of two to a team of 10, with approximately 40 part-time employees helping to make their programs and their goals a reality.

There are many ways to get involved with the organization, including multiple volunteer opportunities, and they're also looking for finance and HR professionals to join their volunteer Board of Directors.

If you'd like to learn more about Girls Inc. and what it brings to the local community, they are set to host a Community Barbecue on September 27, inviting the community to "come in, see our new space, come learn about who we are and our programs," says Wallace.

The event will include the community barbecue staples of hot dogs and bouncy castles, but there will also be a chance to engage with some of the activities that have become the trademark of Girls Inc in York Region.

These programs and activities got a recent boost from another part of the Aurora community, being selected as one of 10 community non-profits to share in Magna International's 2025 Community Fund.

"We are so thankful to be chosen by the Magna Community Fund. It's such a great organization because they really do read your proposals, they listen, and they want to give back to the community that they live and work in," says Wallace. "We're going to be

able to use that funding to help support our teen programming, which we are trying to grow, and we also provide mental health programming for girls, helping to reduce their anxiety, building their self-confidence, and really giving them the tools they need to succeed ? to stay in school, to study those hard subjects and to not give up.

?This is helping us to continue serving those girls who need it, and I would say with the way the world is going, maybe we need it even more now than ever before.?

For more information on Girls Inc. of York Region, visit www.girlsincyork.org.

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