

## Giving Shop raises \$12,000 for vital community organizations



Five community organizations have an extra spring in their step this season after receiving a shared \$12,000 from Oakridge Fashions.

Last week, Deb Clark, owner of the downtown Aurora boutique, visited with the Alzheimer Society of York Region, CHATS, Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers, the Southlake Health Foundation, and the Canadian Federation of University Women Aurora-Newmarket, to present them with their donations, proceeds from the store's annual Giving Shop.

Each year during the holiday season, Oakridge's launches the Giving Shop, showcasing a wide selection of gifts for everyone on your shopping list, with proceeds from these selected items benefitting the community.

The community's support for the Giving Shop during Holiday Season 2025 was tremendous, resulting in a record-busting donation for the select community organizations.

?'It's always a joy for me to have the Giving Shop,' says Clark. 'Every year, your heart sings a little bit when you know that these funds are being raised and, for me, it's the day of delivering the funds that's so meaningful because I get to have a glimpse of all the people who are your so-called 'boots on the ground,' making these organizations function, many of whom are volunteers. I'm reminded when I do this of what a fantastic community we have around us, and how every single day of every single year there are folks from our neighbourhoods from somewhere in our lives who are out there, helping to deliver the services and the needs for various agencies.

'I saw it at Rose of Sharon, women who are caring for the babies so that young mothers can attend class. I saw it at CHATS, where the volunteers are helping with a lunch that seniors would schedule themselves for a nice outing, and they are being cared for, taken care of, and served by volunteers ' being served as a senior, so lovely. It's always a great reminder of just amazing work that is being done. While it's lovely to deliver the cheques and hear from these agencies [how] these funds will be used, and how it will make a difference for them in the coming fiscal year ' maybe they don't realize, but what I'm seeing as well is this army of volunteers across our community making those dollars stretch. That's what I come away with and am really lifted by.'

The more regular customers ' and the community at large ' support the Giving Shop, the more Oakridge's can give back.

One hundred per cent of the profits on the Giving Shop merchandise goes into the donation program and now, as the initiative goes from strength to strength, the organizations themselves are helping spread the word knowing that every dollar counts.

An added attraction this past season was Clark's emphasis on highlighting Canadian products and producers.

'This was the first year to put a specific push on items made in Canada - small batch, small-entrepreneurial, family-run businesses,' she says. 'From Montreal, we had chocolate. From New Brunswick, we had a farm that brought in maple syrup. From Quebec City, we had some lovely little soaps that were handmade and hand-batched. From Edmonton, we had craft earrings, and it went right across the country. From Newfoundland, a woman who used to live in York Region years ago and moved to Newfoundland, loved tea and always wondered about having her own small business, and started an organic tea company. That sort of thing really resonated well because of the wave of awareness and patriotism around Canada. Anything that was strongly Canadian-themed really, really made a mark. That was new and different and something we will continue to look at as we do our buying for 2026.'

It's a solid foundation for the year of giving ahead.

'What I want to say is anyone who supported the Giving Shop, because of you we can do this,' says Clark. 'It's a community effort towards community, and Oakridge's just facilitates it, if you ask me. We love the Giving Shop because it's a service to the community, but it is a service to our customers, too, because in a busy holiday period, sometimes the things that we spend the most time running around to different locations to find are the smaller items. Those often are the very things that are called for in various little Secret Santa, family, or neighbourhood-type exchanges.'

'It is because they come, because they support the Giving Shop, that the Giving Shop can then turn around and support the community. I think it's a great organic example of how every single person can make a difference?. It is never too small when we reach out to try and do something, so I think there is sometimes a sense that 'I cannot really make a meaningful difference', or you hear the expression, 'Well, it would just be a drop in the bucket,' but that bucket gets filled by drops. It does matter. The Giving Shop, purchase by purchase, is a drop, and every one of those drops fills the bucket higher and higher.'

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