

Hope House Hospice walk will make poignant return to Lambert Willson Park



The importance of hospice care will be highlighted in Aurora next Saturday, June 1, as Hope House Hospice hosts Hike for Hope at Lambert Willson Park.

The event, the first solo hike for Hope House in more than five years, will open at 10 a.m. for check-in and registration, followed by the hike itself at 11 a.m., and lunch at 12 noon.

Organizers have set a fundraising goal of \$25,000 for this year's event and, in addition to the fundraising element, they hope to raise awareness of the services community hospices can provide.

"Hope House assists people right from diagnosis and onward," says Hope House Hospice Executive Director Heidi Bonner. "We have programs that support people who are not necessarily going on the palliative path but are going through, perhaps, cancer treatments and they need some support and community and connections. We do offer programs that offer those folks early on in the disease trajectory; we help people of all ages in terms of our bereavement support for children, youth and adults; and we have a new program called Help Us Understand Grief which is specifically for children and youth.

"We have hired a child life specialist to work with the community and help support the younger folks helping to understand about serious illness, about dying, in an age-appropriate way. We're excited about that program and also it is important to know that our programs are offered at no cost, that we do need to fundraise about 65 per cent of our budget. We have limited government funding and in order to continue to offer the quality programs we provide free of charge to the community, we do need to fundraise and these are important fundraisers that will help us do the work that we do."

Hope House held its own fundraising hikes through 2018 and, as public health restrictions began to ease during the global pandemic, teamed up with Richmond Hill's Hill House Hospice for a walk in 2022.

Now, helping spearheading this year's solo event is Rhonda Flanagan, Director of Development for Hope House. Flanagan says they're expecting at least 100 participants to descend upon the Industrial Parkway North greenspace for the June 1 event and promises a morning of music, fun activities, a selfie booth, a warm-up, and picnic lunch.

"It is the first time in a few years that we have done this event, so we're hoping this is an Inaugural Hike for Hope and it will just grow from here over the next few years," says Flanagan. "This is an opportunity to support your community in a grassroots way. We are definitely one of the smaller events but we are there for people from the beginning of their journey. We don't have residential beds. We're a community hospice, which is a little bit different. If you have young kids we help children as well as seniors and

people of all ages. It's an opportunity to meet new people in your community and to give back in a compassionate and caring way ? and to those who truly need it ? and everybody in this community at one point in our lives will need these types of services.?

If you are unable to make the Hike itself, Hope House says there are many activities you can do on your own to help support the event.

For a list of these activities, the event, and how to register and/or support an individual participant or team on their Hike, visit www.hopehousehospice.com/hikeforhope.

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