

Mental health, food insecurity programs get boost from Magna Community Fund

Hundreds of people throughout central and northern York Region benefit from the mental health and food insecurity programs run by the Salvation Army's Northridge Community Church ? and now the organization has received a significant boost in its capacity.

Salvation Army Northridge is one of 10 local non-profits this year to share in the Magna Community Fund, a program launched to continue the legacy of giving established by the auto parts giant's Wild West Hoedown, which served the community for more than 30 years.

Northridge's share of the pot will go towards their mental health and food insecurity programs, both of which are seeing an increase in community demand.

Northridge's Angela Covert says the organization has a psychologist on staff and two interns see a minimum of 15 individuals a week come through their mental health programs and this is only growing.

The money received from Magna, she said, will support additional sessions, particularly for clients between the ages of 16 and 20, for almost a year.

“We will want to hire somebody at minimum one day or two days a week, so it will support some of the costs related to bringing in someone who will specialize in those areas and group work around that,” says Covert, adding the waiting list for existing programs is also on the rise. “We’re getting more referrals from Southlake and our psychotherapist’s group work that she does, there’s been some recent research around the reality that for many people meeting in a group setting, having a skilled therapist in a group, sometimes is equally as good as one-on-one work. Being able to engage more people, say in a group setting, can offset some of our wait lists as well so we can put people into a group setting while they’re waiting for one-on-one.

“Any additional monies that we get, like this \$10,000, allows us to stretch our services a little bit more.”

Magna has long been a supporter of the Salvation Army's mental health programs, but this is the first time they've been a recipient of the Magna Community Fund. Support, however, has come in many areas, including two back-to-back galas supporting Northridge's initiatives.

This year's fundraiser, as The Auroran reported last month, is much different: a traditional Newfoundland Kitchen Party, which will take place at Northridge's base on Leslie Street, just north of Wellington, on September 18, featuring music from Off the Rock.

The event will feature traditional Newfoundland music and food, which will be served in an hors d'oeuvre style, and ceremonies like a new spin on the traditional “screeching in.” As no alcohol will be served at this particular Newfoundland Kitchen Party, the honours will be done by Jen of The Newfie Sisters, with Purity Syrup taking the place of the high-octane rum.

“Purity Syrup is straight from Newfoundland and equally used,” says Covert of the screeching-in, noting ticket-holders will be able to pre-book their ceremonial timeslot, and teasing some of the more musically-inclined attendees will have the chance to show off on the spoons.

“You’re going to have the opportunity to listen to great music, dance, have fun and be silly,” she continues. “My hope is that people just come and have fun. As I have worked my way through this summer, my experience with kids going to camp and all that, I personally am benefiting from a better-nuanced understanding of the layers of what we do here. I find my job overwhelming at times because I could be sitting here in one hour and dealing with a multitude of different issues and then get a call to pick somebody up from camp. But when I sit down later and really look at the day and how we touched people's lives in different ways, that's what this is all about. I want people to come in for a party, and come in for mental health, because it is a very pressing concern for many people, and leave with a better understanding of what more we can do.”

The Newfoundland Kitchen Party will take place at Northridge Community Church (15338 Leslie Street, Aurora) on September 18 beginning at 7.30 p.m. Tickets are \$50. For more information, including the purchase of tickets, call 905-895-6276.

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