

## Volunteers work to strengthen communities

(Re: View from Queen's Park, January 12)

MPP Ballard's article last week emphasizes the important role volunteer organizations play in giving back to addressing community issues such as homelessness and poverty.

I commend MPP Ballard for bringing to our attention the great contributions of organizations like Blue Door Shelter, Belinda's Place, Inn From the Cold, 360 Kids and the Sutton Youth Shelter.

Government alone cannot fund and provide the manpower, so we are encouraged to help, to do our part, in any way possible, as these valuable organizations are in constant need of funding and members to volunteer.

Building on the article, we are so very fortunate here in Aurora to have the annual Magna Hoedown generating millions in funding for dozens of charities in and around our surrounding communities.

Complementing this generous funding initiative of Belinda Stronach is another she created through Magna International in 2008, called Neighbourhood Network (NN), the focus of which is to grow a network that brings those who wish to volunteer, to those organizations that are in need of volunteers.

To wit, refer to the front page photo in last week's Auroran "Need a Hand?" asking for volunteers to sign up to clear snow off the drive and walks of low income seniors and those with disabilities. Brilliant! NN is especially valuable to High School Students who must complete the mandatory 40 hours of community service in order to graduate.

There are a lot of students who do not know where to begin to connect. To register, it is as simple as going online to [www.neighbourhoodnetwork.org](http://www.neighbourhoodnetwork.org).

Indeed, outside Aurora, NN has been welcomed with open arms by partner municipalities as the "go to" organization for volunteers and connecting community organizations. There are over 10,000 registered volunteers in Aurora, Newmarket, East Gwillimbury, King and Georgina "connecting likeminded partners and volunteers to all work together for the betterment of our communities, encouraging Volunteerism and #StengtheningCommunities.

I would also like to highlight another special photo in last week's issue (pg 7). Here we have seven outstanding young ambassadors of 100 Youth Who Care donating a cheque to Welcoming Arms.

Welcoming Arms is an organization consisting of members from our local churches here in Aurora who fund and provide a nourishing meal, in a safe environment, for those who struggle, complete with fellowship and social networking assistance.

The 6th annual Aurora Winter Blues Festival (AWBF), another volunteer organization, has expanded its programing throughout the month of February this year.

To date, the AWBF has donated \$60,000 to Blue Door Shelter, CHATS, and Youth in Music. Come out and enjoy some award winning Blues and contribute to our community. First off is the amazing Blues Bash on Saturday, February 4 at the Highland Automotive Showroom. Go to [www.awbf.ca](http://www.awbf.ca) for tickets and information

Councillor John Abel

Aurora