

DCAFS seeking new, quality board members



By Mike Pickford

One of Dufferin County's most vital service providers is on the lookout for local volunteers as it seeks to fill some seats at the boardroom level.

Dufferin Child and Family Services (DCAFS) provides guidance and support to approximately 3,000 local residents each year. Specializing in three core areas, the DCAFS model is "really unique" in Ontario according to the organization's Executive Director, Jennifer Moore. Speaking to the Citizen this week, she explained how DCAFS has grown into the integrated children's service agency it is today and the important role its volunteer board has played along the way.

"Dufferin Child and Family Services is a multi-service organization that provides child protection services, children's mental health services and developmental support services to children and families in the local community," Ms. Moore said. "There are not many agencies like us in Ontario. We have worked to build up our services over the years and we're really proud to offer the wealth of programming we do in Dufferin County."

DCAFS currently boasts over 20 different programs under its three main umbrellas. According to Ms. Moore, the organization is extremely flexible in the way it goes about its business, believing strongly in its current model.

"People need support in a variety of different ways and they don't always know exactly what they are asking for at the time," Ms. Moore said. "So we want to make sure we have enough of a breadth of service provision that, regardless of diagnosis, regardless of the issue and regardless of other systemic barriers a family may be facing, that we can be there to facilitate the type of support that is right for them at the right time."

The board has played a pivotal role in ensuring that process not only exists, but flourishes, in recent years. With anywhere between nine and 12 volunteer executives required at all times, DCAFS finds itself a little light in that area at present. Ms. Moore is officially putting the call out in an attempt to attract some "great, local, community-minded" individuals to step up.

All members appointed to the board can serve up to a maximum of two three-year terms. Members are expected to attend monthly board meetings, which typically last up to three hours, as well as sit on at least one organizational committee. Committees meet four times a year, says Ms. Moore, with meetings usually running around two hours.

Currently, DCAFS has nine sitting board members, although Ms. Moore knows of at least one who will be leaving in 2018. She's hoping to follow up what she described as a "very successful" recruitment drive in 2017 with another one this year.

"We have always had a very strong volunteer group here in Dufferin County. Our last recruitment effort last year brought some really incredible candidates forward. The people we have sitting on the board right now are just incredible individuals who really have a vested interest in the wellbeing of our community. We're hoping to supplement that group with a couple of new additions in 2018," Ms. Moore said.

In an ideal world, the makeup of the Board would include individuals from all communities in Dufferin, Ms. Moore stated, while she also highlighted a few skills she was particularly looking for in potential new members.

"There are specific skill sets that are very helpful to have on any Board of Directors. Our particular board's focus is more centred around governance, which means they are required to present an overarching oversight of the organization. Their job is to understand what we need from an operational perspective to achieve our strategic goals," Ms. Moore said.

She added, "We do know one person whose term is ending is a chartered accountant. She has been the chair of our finance and audit

committee for the past few years, so it would definitely be an asset to recruit a member with that particular area of expertise. We have had an ongoing need for someone with marketing skills, while having someone with legal knowledge on the board is always very helpful.?

Anyone with an interest in applying is encouraged to forward a resumé to DCAFS at carrie.kenks@dcafs.on.ca. For more information on the organization, visit www.dcafs.on.ca.

Starting April 1, DCAFS will be recognized as the service provider for the Special Needs Resourcing Program in Dufferin County. The intention of this particular program is to ensure that children who have additional needs will have the opportunity to experience inclusion in licensed child care facilities.

?We'll be able to help professionals to gain a thorough understanding of how they can work towards inclusion with children with additional needs ? caring for them properly and addressing any additional issues they may have,? Ms. Moore said. ?We'll be working with families and the children too in an attempt to make sure they feel they are being served properly and correctly.?

The program has been given the moniker Inclusion for Children with Additional Needs, ICAN for short.

?What we envision long term is being able to provide a wide offering of services to families right from the outset when they start in childcare,? Ms. Moore stated. ?This is going to benefit many, many children.?