

Second annual HatsOnDufferin campaign an overwhelming success



Written By JASEN OBERMEYER

HatsOnDufferin, the local non-profit's second annual campaign is a huge success, with 2575 hats, 353 pairs of mittens, and 130 scarves made to ensure that every child, person and family in the community is kept warm for the winter.

"It's heart-warming," said founder Stephany St. Louis, who started this initiative after learning of the growing rate of poverty in the county. She also sat on the Poverty Reduction Task Force. "I got to be apart of those steps and processes to see where the needs were."

A recent report indicates that one in 10 people in Dufferin County are living in poverty. A homelessness enumeration report indicated that nearly 50 per cent of its respondents are youth. To help combat this, the County held a poverty reduction summit in January.

"When you see a whole community of services and people coming together to work together for one-end goal, it's super heart-warming," commented Stephany, who added she didn't think this organization would be so big so quickly.

She explained that last year 1,600 hats were picked up, "which was pretty significant," and come May this year, had 2500 hats made, focused a bit more on mittens and scarves.

Since partnering with several businesses, organizations, and municipalities, HatsOnDufferin has taken the community by storm. Last year, the organization received recognition at the 2017 Dufferin Board of Trade Business Excellence Awards and the 2017 Orangeville Arts and Culture Awards. This year, Ms. St. Louis said people have even come from Toronto to drop off hats.

Along with adding scarves and mittens this year, the organization is going out to service providers including Choices Youth Shelter, Dufferin Child and Family Services, and Family Transition Place. "We are putting hats in all of those service providers, because there has been an ask for it."

The hats, scarves and mittens have now been distributed to Dufferin's 29 elementary, high schools, and colleges.

Ms. St. Louis said there is clearly a need, and the organization has grown this year with "a lot more people reaching out."

She hopes that with this busy year, HatsOnDufferin can help alleviate the issue of poverty, and even end the stigma surrounding it.

"I'm happy in helping the community."

For more information on HatsOnDufferin visit hatsondufferin.ca.