

Diamond in the Hills Fashion show raises \$225,000 for Bethell Hospice

By **Zachary Roman**

Bethell Hospice is the 'diamond' in the hills of Caledon.

Bonnie Ledson, one of the six self-titled 'divas' who organize the annual Diamond in the Hills Fashion Show in support of Bethell Hospice, said that's how she and her team came up with the name for their event.

The 2022 show was held at The Arlington Estate in Kleinburg on Nov. 13, in front of a sold-out crowd of over 400 women.

Ledson explained there used to be seven divas, but one retired from organizing at 85. The remaining six divas - Ledson, Debbie Glover, Barb Gough, Barb Goodhand, Danila Maric,

and Judy Petursson - are all between the ages of 67 and 83, and had been planning the event since September.

'They're all dynamic people, they're all good workers, they all have their own roles and we get along really well,' said Ledson, adding that when the work's done the divas love to party together too. 'We all really believe in Bethell.'

Ledson said sponsors play a huge part in fundraising for the fashion show, so much so that before the show even began she knew that \$202,000 had been raised. Ledson said the divas were able to lock in 12 different sponsors at the \$10,000 tier which was a big help. Adding to the fundraising totals on the day of the fashion show itself were silent and live auctions. Fundraising involves a lot of legwork, and Ledson explained the divas toured the entire industrial area of Bolton in search of sponsors.

'We really appreciate our wonderful sponsors and donors, and Ramy Sallal, owner of Arlington Estate, who lives in Caledon and is so very supportive of our event,' said Ledson.

She also noted her love of fashion came from a time when she sewed all her own clothes because she couldn't afford to do anything else.

Ledson said herself and the other divas all love to dress up in stylish clothes. Each year, the divas try to make the fashion show bigger and better, and raise more money too. The first time the show ran, \$41,000 was raised, but they knew they could do better. Now, the fashion show is a major part of Bethell Hospice's yearly fundraising.

Bethell Hospice Foundation executive director Nicole Hand said she was extremely grateful for the divas' outstanding work in organizing a successful event.

'Community events are extremely important to Bethell Hospice Foundation, especially during the current post-pandemic situation,' said Hand. 'The committee's belief in the importance of palliative care in the community is truly appreciated.'