

COMMENT

Helping your community starts right here

By David Churchill

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David Churchill

I think I found the heartbeat of Georgetown.

You're welcome to come and take a look for yourself.

You walk in the back door of St. John's United Church and head up a couple of flights of stairs. From here, the future looks a little bit brighter.

From here, a small but devoted team sends out love, hope and help to thousands of people across Georgetown. I know my family has benefited from the United Way. Yours may have too, without you even realizing it.

Homeless youth, adults who need a hand learning how to read, developmentally delayed kids and adults, seniors who need a little help with daily care, girls getting a boost of self-esteem, it's all possible with assistance from the United Way. There will also be care packages again this year to make sure all kids across Georgetown have the Christmas they deserve.

In all, 21 local agencies and 27 programs get funding from the United Way. And money donated in Halton Hills stays in the community.

Janet Foster, the executive director of the United Way of Halton Hills, estimates about one in four local residents are served by an agency the charity supports.

This year, Foster and a team of about 50 volunteers are looking to raise about \$375,000, a realistic goal they hope to hit after falling short of the \$400,000 goal they set last year.

Foster and fundraising chair Susan Ksiezoposki say it wasn't through lack of effort that last year's target wasn't reached. They were perhaps a little bit optimistic, knowing that there are more people they would like to help if the money was there.

"We all know how tough it is out there for fundraising," Foster says. "We also know there's a lot more groups that could use our help."

Ksiezoposki says the agency "sets an aggressive goal every year because the need keeps growing."

So far, so good. The 2015 campaign is right where it should be.

But it's getting tougher. Volunteers are harder to find when everyone's life seems so busy. There are also so many other charities fighting for the same dollars.

Foster has been with the agency since 2007. She grew up in Georgetown, raised her children here and now has grandchildren in town. She cares about Halton Hills and its future. She dreams about what could be accomplished with a little more cash.

"We often think about what we could do if we got just \$50 from every business in town," she says.

When Foster says it, it's more wishful thinking than a challenge. But if she won't say it, I will. Let's donate. Most of us can afford a few dollars to make our community a better place.

Foster likes to think of it as "paying it back."

She tells the story of a single mom who needed a Christmas hamper. The next year the same woman was back again, not for more help, but this time with a donation to ensure another family had a Merry Christmas.

That's what the United Way is all about. It's helping your neighbours, helping your community.

You can make a donation or find out more by going to the website unitedwayofhaltonhills.com.

The website also has details on the always popular holiday house tour set for Nov. 21 and an online auction which is running all month long.

David Churchill is a longtime journalist who writes about family, life in Georgetown and a love of travel. Follow him on Twitter @ChurchillDJ



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InFocus would like to Welcome Jennifer Lusby to the team!



Jennifer is a lifetime resident of Georgetown and brings with her over 20 years of experience as a Registered Physiotherapist.

Jennifer will be providing after school and after work hours at the clinic.



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