



COMMUNITY

Paying it forward and bringing the community closer together

John Howard Society fundraiser builds on last year's milestone anniversary celebration and helps support the United Way while promoting local businesses

By **Catherine Whitnall** Kawartha Lakes This Week

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COVID-19 may be keeping people apart but, as far as the John Howard Society of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton is concerned, it's actually brought the community closer together.

Last year, the agency was looking for a way to mark 35 years of serving the area. With offices located in Lindsay and Minden, the society delivers evidence-based programs and services that range from helping youth develop life skills they need to

achieve their full potential, to helping families navigate issues of criminal justice, to providing job training for those leaving incarceration so they can contribute to their community in a meaningful way.

“Someone suggested we do a ‘pay it forward’ celebration and it sounded like a great idea,” said executive director Lois Powers.

The agency partnered with Boiling Over on Kent Street and paid for dozens of coffees.

“This year, with COVID happening, we wanted to keep that positive message of giving back going,” continued Powers, noting that the pandemic had hit small businesses especially hard so it was decided to expand the idea of helping to all of downtown. “It was also a way to promote shopping locally, especially during the holidays.”

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Staff came up with the idea of buying and decorating glass Christmas ornaments. Local businesses could buy one for \$10 and have their logo or business card featured in, or on, the ball, which was later used to decorate a tree downtown. The roughly \$500 raised through the purchases was donated to the United Way.

“Our staff and our downtown businesses have really gone above and beyond ... But I think the more a community does, the more it’s willing to do,” said Powers who came to the agency four years ago from Toronto and is overwhelmed by the community support over the years, particularly during the pandemic. “People are very community focused here . . I have seen, over and over again, so much help for those who are the most vulnerable in this community.”

Powers pointed out that, moving forward, that type of support will not go unnoticed.

“There’s almost a new momentum that’s been created because of COVID. There’s

this new collaboration going on that's bringing so many groups and people together to rise above and come out the other end of this stronger than before," said Powers. "Funders are going to remember who stepped up during this whole thing and pay it forward themselves."

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