

Home > News > How Dunsford Kept A Privately Owned "Community Centre" Going, Despite The Pandemic

News

How Dunsford Kept A Privately Owned "Community Centre" Going, Despite The Pandemic



By **Pamela Vanmeer** December 2, 2021



KAWARTHA LAKES—"I think I can, I think I can" is the signature phrase from the beloved children's book *The Little Engine That Could*. It's also the catchphrase for the community of Dunsford who funded and maintain one of the only privately-owned "Community Centre" in the City of Kawartha Lakes.

The Dunsford Community Centre was built 27 years ago by the community. Five community members thought up with the idea and

started fundraising, bringing the entire community together. Through community donations and Wintario Grants, they were able to build the 10,000 square foot facility.

"Our Community Centre is the epitome of community," Faye Carslake, the Event Coordinator and Fundraiser for the centre, told Kawartha 411 news. "It was built by the community for the community and remains the hub of the community."

There are 24 other community centres in the City of Kawartha Lakes but they are all municipally owned and maintained by the City using tax dollars. Pontypool also has a privately owned community centre.

It costs about \$3,000 a month just to keep the doors open and Carslake says the pandemic made it more difficult to keep it going.

"We are very frugal and careful and thankfully we've had a bit of a reserve to get through COVID. "We still have to pay the bills, it costs a substantial amount every month, we still have to maintain it, clean it, heat it etc."

The building has a large event room that can hold up to 360 people. A smaller room that will hold up to 150 people and another area built specifically to house a library. The City rents out the library space and Carslake says without that rent they wouldn't be able to keep the doors open.

"We get a bit of tax relief from the City. We also have the library, the building was built for the library and without that rent we would be in big trouble."



The large hall at the Dunsford Community Centre.

The hall regularly hosts weddings, graduations, celebrations of life, birthday parties, baby showers, public meetings and more, all at very reasonable prices. (When allowed by COVID regulations) All of the work involved including set-up, take down, cleaning and catering is done by community volunteers. There isn't one paid staff member involved.

"It is a gathering place and people really feel special and needed when they come to help out with our events. To help out in the kitchen when they don't like cooking, or to serve when they aren't comfortable doing it, they do it because they want the community centre to survive and we make it fun." Carslake explains.

Councillor Ron Ashmore says the centre is extremely important to the community.

"It's a very important facility with the Community Centre as well as the library there," Ashmore says. "There's also a baseball diamond behind. It serves a very large geographic area and a large population

catchment area"

The importance of the building recently came into focus when the Dunsford District Elementary School had to be evacuated on a cold, snowy day. Students walked with their teachers to the community centre where volunteers met them with the heat on and a big smile.

"That was an amazing feeling to know that we were there for the students and that they had a warm place to come," explained Carlslake. "Of course, there was no charge, we just wanted to help out but I believe it was good for the community."

With pandemic related closure and events being cancelled the community has had to get creative with its fundraising. Carlslake says they try not to rely on donations but rather something that also gives back to the community. Over the past 20 months, they've gone into overdrive holding fundraisers such as homemade pizza night, homemade lasagna sales and more. One sale alone raised \$2700.

"It's all about the community they are keeping us going."

If you are interested in volunteering or renting the community centre contact Fay at 705-341-3699 or by email at faycarslake@hotmail.com