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Local Kinsmen celebrate 35th anniversary

By **JANET BAINE**
Staff writer

Unlike many other men's service clubs, the Kinsmen Club is all-Canadian.

The first group started in 1920 in Hamilton when 12 young men got together. Throughout the history of Kin, friendship has been key, but the group also contributes to the community.

The Georgetown Kinsmen Club is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year and is one of 575 clubs across Canada. Georgetown has 35 members, including some from Acton, and is larger than most clubs, which average 24 members.

"We don't have the old established people in our group, the average age for people is far lower than other service clubs," said president Brian Shirliffe. In fact, members are encouraged to join a K-40 group once they reach the age of 45, and Georgetown has one of these. Women can form Kinette Clubs, and Georgetown had one until about four years ago, when it disbanded because the membership was small, Shirliffe said.

"The hardest part of moving to a community is kids take so much time, you don't have a lot of time to make friends," he said. He joined the Georgetown club when he moved here a few years ago. Most of the members have children at around the same age, and so they automatically have many common interests.

Any man 21 or older can join the club, but most members are in their 30s, he said.

"We support a lot of the charities in town, and try wherever we can to improve the facilities of the community. And we have a lot of fun doing it, too," Shirliffe said.

The Georgetown Kinsmen meet every second Wednesday at the McGibbon Hotel for dinner, and they also carry out their business at the meetings. The meetings are held from

September until June, and a membership costs \$90. During the summer many members still get together, since the Kinsmen have two teams in the baseball league.

Kinsmen are very involved in local sports. They sponsor the girls softball league, Georgetown hockey and baseball associations. Along with the Hockey Heritage committee, they sponsor the annual hockey heritage banquet.

Kinsmen man the gates at the Georgetown Fair each year and help out with Classics for Cancer. They participate in the annual toy drive at Christmas and also host the seniors tour of the lights, picking seniors up by bus and taking them to see the Christmas lights, then to GDHS for some refreshments and entertainment.

They put about \$25,000 back into the community annually. Funds are raised through annual Christmas tree sales, the TV auction, selling fireworks and holding other events.

Kinsmen clubs across the country have donated close to \$12 million to the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, and Georgetown club has played its part in this. In the 70s, when bumping was a popular form of dance, they held Bump for Life, as an annual fundraiser. More recently they held Walk to the Moon for CF.

Over the years, the Georgetown Kinsmen have purchased the batting cage (\$12,000), the ice resurfer at the Alcott Arena (\$22,000), and helped build a seniors' apartment building, Kincoort, in Georgetown (\$18,000).

"The hope for the future is to supply services to the new areas in town, as well as continue with our other activities," Shirliffe said. Part of his job as president will be to select projects for the coming year.



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