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NEWS



Links2Care's Community Support Coordinator Cathy Gerrow spoke at a November meeting of the Canadian Federation of University Women-Georgetown on the topic of Poverty in Halton Hills.

Photo by Nelia Raposo

LinksCare provides aid to those in need in the community

By Nelia Raposo
Special to The IFP

There are all kinds of services and supports out there if people know where to look and are brave enough to ask.

In Halton Hills people in need can start by calling Cathy Gerrow at Links2Care.

On Tuesday evening (Nov. 3) Gerrow, a community support program coordinator, spoke to a crowd of about 50 Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) members about her work and the people she serves.

She describes a recent morning where she had two young mothers and their respective children come into her office hours apart looking for housing after their partners and income providers left.

"You can imagine the distress and emotional turmoil these young women were experiencing," Gerrow says.

But her workdays are not always this climactic, sometimes clients just need to use the phone.

"If you are living on an Ontario Works budget of \$600 a month and you have \$10 left to carry you through the month after paying rent there is not much left for food let alone a telephone," Gerrow says.

Clients may struggle with literacy issues and the lack of self-esteem that may accompany low education.

"In this day and age of technology, sometimes there are people who struggle to make a phone call. Sometimes I will call for them, provide a little intro on my client and then pass the phone over to him/her," Gerrow explains.

After years of not doing his taxes because he couldn't afford it, one dad of three young children came in to meet with a volunteer accountant. He had received an eviction notice and had no job.

"He ended up getting money back from Canada Revenue Agency; enough to secure housing



CATHY GERROW

and he got a job shortly after," Gerrow says.

Some of the many services provided under the Links2Care umbrella include:

- **Holiday Giving:** provides clothing, gift cards and toiletries to lower income families through outreach with generous community members and businesses that sponsor families financially through donations.

- **School Supplies:** the Backpack program provides children from lower income families with school bags and supplies.

- **Sport and Recreational Activities:** Links2Care is an access point for the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Program which helps provide financial support so that kids can play in organized sports such as hockey, karate and gymnastics.

- **Income Tax Preparation:** Through the Community Income Tax Program, volunteers trained by Canada Revenue Agency complete income tax returns for people with lower incomes.

- **Transitional Housing:** three furnished apartments temporarily house homeless families while they search for permanent housing with assistance from staff at Links2Care.

- **Food:** Donations of food and other essential items are available to those in need.

- **Utilities:** Winter Warmth Program helps people stay on top of Union Gas bills, while the LEAP Program assists with hydro arrears. This help is for people who are at risk of being disconnected by utility providers and have exhausted all other sources of financial aid.

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