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PETS

Golfers, sponsors needed for guide dog fundraiser

DANIELLE MARR

dmarr@caledonenterprise.com

Georgetown resident Karen Feikema founded the group Passport to Freedom in 2007 as part of a mandated work project - but it has spiralled into so much more than that since then.

"We had to do a fundraiser, so I decided that I wanted to do an animal fundraiser and just kind of landed on the concept of helping people get guide dogs," she said. "I love animals and I really wanted to help people so it just kind of made sense for me."

While the rules at work changed long ago, Feikema and the rest of the members of Passport to Freedom has continued the fundraising efforts for the Lions Foundation of Canada Dog Guides over the last decade.

"We alone as a group have raised over \$120,000 [...] and sponsored fifteen dog guides since 2007 for people who needed them," said Andrew Hamblin, a member of Passport to Freedom.

Over the years, he explained, they have hosted many fundraising events ranging from an Elvis Night to a Poker night to their most popular - Dogs Go Golfing event.

The event is taking place on June 25 this year and they are currently looking for both golfers and sponsors for the big day.

"This upcoming event we are hoping to actually sponsor a dog for a young female that lives in Georgetown and is in need of a dog guide," Hamblin continued. "It's close to our hearts this year, seeing our money stay in our community for someone who needs it."

It is people like Feikema, Hamblin, and their group that allow the Lions Foundation to do what they do, explained the organization's Director of Development, Julie Jelinek.



Jim Craigmyle/Photo

Passport to Freedom is preparing to host golf tournament to raise funds for a young woman in Georgetown to receive a guide dog through the Lion's Foundation of Canada.

"We simply wouldn't be able to operate without the hard work of people like Karen," she said.

Each dog costs approximately \$25,000 to raise and train, but the sponsorship program, supported by fundraising efforts like these, allows the Lions Foundation to provide the dogs at no cost to the person in need.

"I love to see the puppy graduations," said Feikema. "Seeing clients get their service dog and knowing that I had something to do with making it happen is the best feeling in the world."

To get involved with this year's fundraiser as a golfer or a sponsor, contact Hamblin or Feikema at passport_to_freedom@hotmail.com.

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