



VERONICA APPIA



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AS COMMUNITY JOURNALISTS, OUR HEARTS ARE INVESTED TOO

It's about trust. Our relationship with our readers is built on transparency, honesty and integrity. As such, we have launched a trust initiative to tell you who we are and how and why we do what we do. This article is part of that project.

There is a special kind of privilege that comes with covering community news stories - especially in a small town like Halton Hills.

As reporters, we are fortunate to be able to dive right into hyper local issues, sit at the kitchen tables of the people who are directly impacted, and bring to light balanced and necessary information to keep the public aware.

And while not all of these stories effect immediate change, many leave a lasting impression or pave the way for something greater to arise from our words.

Some of our stories are tales of neighbours helping neighbours.



Through a number of our efforts we are able to connect citizens in need with the right people, or aid in positive change in the community as a whole.

Others spark a fire. That fire sheds light on real issues that impact our residents - issues that invite the question: how can this town, or this region, or this province do better?

We don't always have the answers. But we are determined to ask the right questions.

Whether through news tips, word of mouth, or our own innate curiosity, our reporters are constantly discovering bits of information that beg to be ad-

ressed or meeting local people whose stories beg to be told.

Like the articles and columns cited below, we proceed to do what we do best. We observe. We listen. And we put those stories in writing.

Earlier this month, I received a news tip from Georgetown resident Laura Watson, a landlord concerned for the health and wellbeing of one of her senior tenants.

The tenant, Dave Dennis, had recently undergone a procedure to extract his teeth to prevent further pain and infection.

Following his initial procedure, which was cov-

ered by Halton Region, he inquired about getting dentures and soon came to the realization that he wouldn't be able to afford them.

Dennis changed around his diet completely, resorting to eating a limited variety of food that he was able to chew and that wouldn't be too abrasive for his gums.

His landlord noticed he was losing a significant amount of weight and began to worry. She decided to create a GoFundMe page to raise the money for Dennis to get his dentures.

I listened to their story. And a few hours after I published it online, local residents stepped up and helped Dennis raise the required \$2,000 for his dentures.

"Just so you know in the four hours you posted Dave's article we have reached our goal!" a very excited text message came through to my phone that evening from Watson. "He

will be so overwhelmed with gratitude!!!"

In August, IFP reporter Alexandra Heck sat down in the living room of Halton Hills senior Shirley Broostad, surrounded by boxes of china and crystal glasses that were all packed up.

Broostad and her husband were moving into a retirement residence outside of Guelph, due to the lack of affordable housing in town.

Heck also sat in the kitchen of Debra Hayes, a senior who had lived in Georgetown for 22 years with her husband. The pair had not been able to find an affordable housing option following their retirement.

"We can't afford to stay here," Hayes told Heck. "We have to leave."

Heck compiled the stories of these residents and spoke with Mayor Rick Bonnette and Halton Region about housing options for seniors.

After publishing the story, Heck says the discourse surrounding affordable housing became more prominent around town.

"I feel the story really put affordable housing on the Town's radar," Heck said. "It was a topic of discussion in many election debates this year."

In June of 2017, the IFP's former reporter Kathryn

Boyle entered the chilly townhouse belonging to a mother whom Boyle refers to in this series as Jane. Jane was on the verge of homelessness, fighting with every inch of her being to get back her daughter, who had fallen victim to the sex trade in Halton, right here in our backyards.

The mother's story, as told by Boyle, was one of courage, of desperation and of a drive to keep on fighting.

After her two-part series was published, Boyle says she was overwhelmed by the support she received for Jane by members of the community.

"After the story came out, many people asked me what they can do to help, and I asked Jane. She said a roof over her head, food and money, and funds for her cellphone. She even asked for a job. One Georgetown man came in and handed me three bags of groceries and \$500 in an envelope to give to her. I was elated, and so was Jane," Boyle wrote in a subsequent column.

"This fight will never end for Jane, but the story has really been a testament to the good-heartedness that lies in so many people."

Looking back over the past decade or so, there are countless other examples.

In 2008, a report landed on then-IFP reporter Ted Brown's desk - a photocopy of the Town's 2009 Preliminary Capital Budget.

In the report, Brown was particularly struck by one proposed item: the demolition of the old armou-

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