



Champion COMMUNITY *Page*

Huge turnout for open house at Oakville facility geared to people fighting cancer

By HOWARD MOZEL
Special to The Champion

Considering the outpouring of support to bring Wellspring House to Oakville, Wednesday's huge turnout for the facility's open house shouldn't have surprised anyone.

Even so, the sheer numbers pleasantly overwhelmed manager Judi Perry-Brinkert, who was busy all day leading tours for interested residents while explaining Wellspring's mandate and benefits.

Guests ranged from cancer patients and their loved ones to the simply curious. What they found is a bright, cheerful place filled with light — and life — with programs that run from peer counselling to yoga.

"It's like a home, as non-clinical as you can possibly get," said Ms Perry-Brinkert. "It's important for us for people who come through the front door to feel at home."

The Wellspring Cancer Support Foundation was established in Toronto in 1992 to help fill the void between the cancer care system and support services.

The Oakville Uptown Core Park site — which is associated with Credit Valley Hospital, the designated cancer treatment centre for Halton and Peel — is a more convenient location for those who had to travel to Toronto in the past.

Cancer patients and families find support

At Wellspring, cancer patients and their families and friends receive comfort, support, practical information and much more. Wellspring's success rests with the high quality of its 30-plus support programs, all of which are predicated on the principle of peer-to-peer counseling. The programs are open to all cancer patients regardless of where they live, but there are no medical treatments of any kind.

Wellspring's expansion to Oakville met with the unprecedented grassroots backing of area businesses and individuals that cut across all social and economic lines.

More than 200 builders and contractors constructed the house while a total of more than 800 companies and individuals saw the project through. There is now a core of 85 dedicated volunteers working in the place.

The Metrontario Group and Mattamy Homes Ltd., for example, donated the construction cost of the premises worth an estimated \$300,000.

"The community (support) that has come forward has been unreal," says Ms Perry-Brinkert, who explained that the Town of Oakville leases Wellspring the site for \$1 a year. "Every time I come in here I'm in awe."

The main activity room — including a gas fireplace, vaulted ceiling, French doors and plenty of windows — is large enough for at least 12 people to practice yoga.

Everyone is welcome to the peer support room without a referral. There people can drop in and talk and receive support from volunteers who can direct them to appropriate programs. A vol-



Photo by PETER C. MCCUSKER

Members of the Wellspring Founding Committee are: (front row, left to right) Sandy Farley, Oakville Mayor Ann Mulvale, Victoria Shipp and Frances Rustom (second row, left to right) Liz Thomson, Lottie Grant, Carole Thompson, Pat Atkinson, Anne Day (back row, left to right) Siep Nyholt, Audrey Williamson and Pat Arch.

unteer will always be on duty at the front reception desk during house hours.

The hours are currently Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Mondays from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. More nights will likely be added as demand increases.

"When we get eight or nine names on the list we'll start a group," said Ms Perry-Brinkert. "Whenever the demand comes, a program starts."

Open only two months, Wellspring has more than 70 members already signed up and involved with programs.

"This far exceeded our expectations," Ms Perry-Brinkert added.

Wellspring offers everything from coping strategies (positive willpower, journaling, art therapy) to meditation and tai chi. There's also a resource library.

To carry all this out, the non-profit Wellspring House relies on money from corporations, individuals and in memoriams. No government funding is provided. This year, though, it will be a beneficiary of the Oakville Dream Home Lottery.

Wellspring will officially open Thursday when Ontario Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer will be on hand at the facility. An official opening ceremony will be held at 2 p.m. The public is welcome.



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COGECO 14 Programming Schedule — September 19th, 2000 - September 25th, 2000

Tuesday, September 19th	
10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm	Plugged In!
6:00pm	Hands up Puppeteers
7:00pm	War Amps
8:00pm	Halton Hills Council and Municipal Awards

Wednesday, September 20th	
10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm	Plugged In!
6:00pm	Cable in the Classroom
7:00pm	Down To Earth
8:00pm	Milton Council

Thursday, September 21st	
10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm	Plugged In!
6:00pm	Watercolour Workshop
7:00pm	Money Week
8:00pm	Halton Region Council

Monday, September 25th	
10am, 11am, Noon	Plugged In! Encore
5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm	Plugged In!
6:00pm	Living on the Edge
7:00pm	The Issue Is...
8:00pm	SportsZone Live

Feature this week: The Season premier of "SportsZone Live" - Monday, 8pm.