

Community Living banks record fundraising proceeds

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

RUTHVEN – Despite being rainy and overcast, September's Ruthven Apple Festival turned out to be the most successful event in its 27-year history.

A record \$35,000 was raised for Community Living Essex County and the festival steering committee handed over a cheque for the cash at a ceremony at Colasanti's Tropical Gardens Dec. 11.

"On behalf of Community Living Essex County, I'd like to recognize the efforts of the Ruthven Apple Festival Steering Committee for making the 27th edition of this annual event, although a wet one, the most successful to date," said Tony DeSantis, the organization's manager of community relations speaking to a group of festival volunteers and supporters.

"Raising the money would simply not be possible without the help of all the communities working together throughout Essex County. From selling raffle

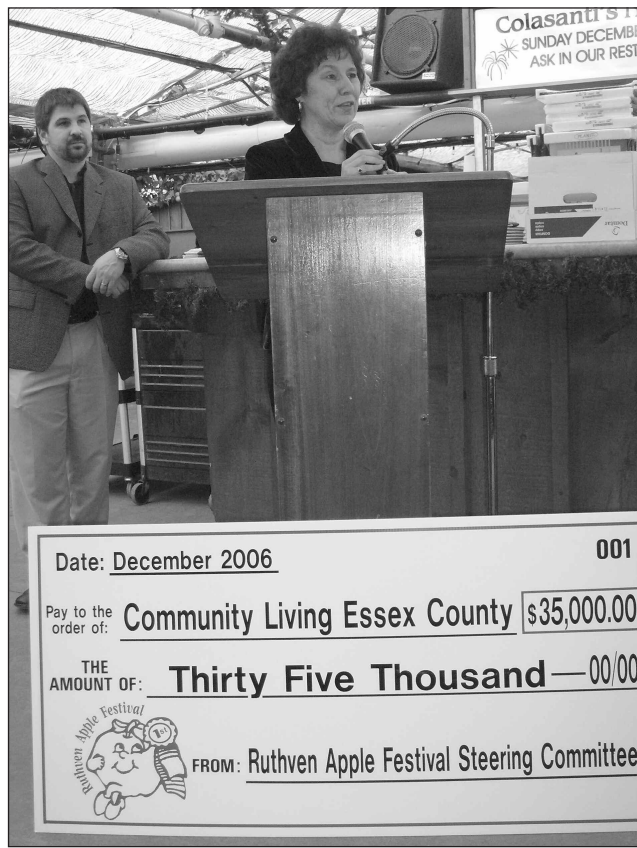
tickets in Kingsville and Essex, to receiving corporate sponsorships in Amherstburg, to Leamington and receiving contributions from our local farmers, to utilizing an army of volunteers to help organize, plan, sell, and on and on...this is what makes this festival so successful."

Over the course of 27 years, the festival has raised \$484,000 for Community Living Essex County.

The fundraising dollars support general programs for people with an intellectual disability and their families. Services include supported living – supervision at home for residents who need guidance with day-to-day activities.

Community Living's Executive Director Nancy Wallace-Gero said this year's event was doubly important after the United Way dropped the organization from its list of charities last year.

"We have a large amount of money we have to make up that was taken away from us in short notice,"



Wallace-Gero said. "There was no way I could've expected we would raise this much this year."

Festival steering committee co-chair Jackie Barraco was also surprised at the record fundraiser, given the lousy weather during one

day of the festival. "I did not know what was going to happen but people came out and supported us yet again," Barraco said. "But it's a good charity and I think people are realizing this is going to a good cause."

Community Living Essex County Executive Director Nancy Wallace-Gero speaks during a ceremony recognizing the efforts of the Ruthven Apple Festival Steering Committee Dec. 11. The festival raised \$35,000 during its September event for Community Living Essex County.

Monster rises at Pelee Dinner Theatre

It won't surpass the original Frankenstein for shock value, but Plaid Jacket Productions' "Frankensense the Christmas Monster", did very well in adapting the Mary Shelley character into a light-hearted presentation.

Kevin Scott was the monster, with ghoulish stitching across his forehead from the work of Frankenstein descendant, Vicky Frank, played by Erin Armstrong, a former Miss Canada runner-up. The monster managed to survive fire, assault and the shouting of an angry mob.

Veteran of many local productions, Terry Ware played Vicky Frank's father. Stephanie Allen-



Left to right: Kevin Scott, Stephanie Allen-Santos and Erin Armstrong performed last weekend in "Frankensense the Christmas Monster" at the Pelee Days Inn Dinner Theatre.

Santos was irrepresible in the part of Ziggy, Vicky

Frank's best friend. Kevin Scott, when not on stage, is

manager of the TSC Store in Essex.

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