



DENISE JONES PRODUCTIONS INC.

Whitchurch-Stouffville's Ashley and Marc Wade have donated \$1 million to Victim Services of York Region. The organization's executive director is Gillian Freeman (right).

Couple gives \$1 M to aid victims

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OUT OF TRAGEDY

Dish soap. Shampoo. Toothpaste and a toothbrush. A pillow. Towel. Bed sheets. Food. Winter coat. Pyjamas.

This is what a typical Christmas wish list looks like for people who are being aided by Victim Services of York Region (VSY).

VSY is a not-for-profit organization that works in conjunction with York Regional Police, OPP and York Region fire services to meet the short-term needs of victims of crime and tragic circumstance.

"Toy Mountain is lovely but we have so many families that need the basics," said Gillian Freeman, executive director of VSY.

There are actually 35 families in need of help this season.

One Whitchurch-Stouffville couple – Ashley and Marc Wade – has decided to go beyond helping support a family. They have instead donated \$1 million. It is the largest donation VSY has ever received.

The money will be used to create a suicide bereavement group, as no such group exists in York Region, according to Freeman.

"We've never had the funds. Not even the dollars for outreach," she said.

Ashley Wade, the co-founder of SleepBelt, met Freeman last year and the Wades sponsored 11 families, as well as started the spring and back-to-school care package programs. They also donated \$100,000, plus money for care package programs.

"It's good to know the money will go to the families who need it," Ashley said.

"It's the first time I've seen every single dollar go directly to families in need," said Marc, a philanthropist and financier.

"We've seen what they did with \$100,000 ... and what impact it had," he said.

Eventually, the Wades want to create a new crisis centre for VSY, which is currently housed in a small office, with no showers or play rooms for children.

Marc called the situation horrendous.

While women and children sleep in shelters, their husbands are in jail, with a bed to sleep on, a roof over their heads, three square meals a day, clothes on their backs and even access to computers.

VSY receives its funding from the Ministry of the Attorney General, United Way and

Victim Services of York Region was created out of a recommendation from the May-Iles inquest.

Arlene May suffered numerous violent episodes at the hands of Randy Iles. Randy killed Arlene and then committed suicide in Collingwood in 1996.

Among the 1998 inquest recommendations was the creation of a seamless domestic violence program across Ontario.

Between April 1, 2014, and March 31, 2015, VSY's fiscal year, they helped 7,000 people in the region. They were people who have been affected by homicide, including attempted murder; serious physical assault; domestic violence; sexual assault; hate crimes and human trafficking.

"If you've heard it in the news, we're probably involved," VSY's Gillian Freeman said.

In the past couple of years, VSY has had a 1,233 per cent increase in human trafficking cases. From 2014 to 2015, there was a 25 per cent increase, according to Freeman.

Roughly 70 per cent of VSY's total client base are domestic or family violence cases with tragic circumstances making up the majority of the remaining cases save and except for sexual assaults, human trafficking, elder abuse, homicide or attempted homicide, according to Freeman.

VSY is called immediately when the police arrive on the scene of one of these incidents.

"They're world is completely shattered and they need the assistance to process it," Freeman said, noting the first 24 to 72 hours are the most important. "You're disoriented, you're confused. The world doesn't make sense."

through Town of Richmond Hill bingos.

It has an annual operating budget of roughly \$800,000.

"We are still incredibility under resourced," Freeman said.

VSY has eight trained counsellors on call 24 hours a day and four crisis counsellors. "That's it," Freeman said, noting the Region of Peel, with the same population, has seven crisis counsellors.

"I feel extremely blessed that the Wades have come into our lives," she said.

"Marc and Ashley have changed our lives here. To be able to assist people who steal our hearts daily, I'm forever thankful for that."

YORK REGION WASTE DEPOTS



Holiday Hours

Date	Elgin Mills CEC and McCleary Court CEC	Markham HHW, Vaughan HHW and East Gwillimbury HHW and Recycling Depot
Thursday, December 24	9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Friday, December 25	Closed	Closed
Saturday, December 26	Closed	Closed
Sunday, December 27	9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Monday, December 28	9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, December 29	Closed	Closed
Wednesday, December 30	Closed	Closed
Thursday, December 31	9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Friday, January 1	Closed	Closed
Saturday, January 2	9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.	8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

For waste depot locations, please visit york.ca/wastedepots or call 1-866-665-6752

