



Thursday, February 15, 2018

A Shrove Tuesday tradition for 20 years, Tuesday's Pancake Lunch in support of the Child Witness Centre raised an incredible \$28,000 in just a few short hours.

The event, held Tuesday at Bingemans' Marshall Hall, welcomed dignitaries, business owners, community champions and friends of the agency – totalling almost 600 guests. The funds raised Tuesday will support the work of the Child Witness Centre, ensuring children and youth who are, or may become, victims or witnesses of abuse or crime will receive the support, education and advocacy needed as they journey through the criminal justice process.

Laura Muirhead, Executive Director of the Child Witness Centre, told Tuesday's audience of a study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal that determined that more than a third of Canadians have suffered some form of child abuse in their lives.

"That means likely a third of the adults in your workplace, a third of the young people at the University of Waterloo, Wilfred Laurier University and Conestoga College or in your neighbourhood are people who have suffered some form of child abuse," said Muirhead.

By supporting young people at their time of need, it is possible to dramatically change the trajectory of their lives – fostering healing, hope and wellbeing as these brave children and youth move from adolescence into adulthood.

"The long term implications for a young person who has experienced abuse and doesn't receive support are staggering," she said. "Youth are 30 per cent less likely to graduate from high school and 26 times more likely to be homeless. This is the reality of the world we are living in."

Now entering its 35th year, the Child Witness Centre provides support to young people through three core programs:

- The Child and Youth Advocate Program – supports children and youth, and their families, in Waterloo Region at the onset of an abuse investigation, regardless of whether charges are laid. Advocates, working as part of the collaborative team at the Child and Youth Advocacy Centre (CYAC) that includes Family and Children's Services of the Waterloo Region and the Waterloo Region Police, ensure young people, and their families, are heard, supported and connected to the resources needed to help them heal. In its first 12 months, Advocates supported more than 340 children and youth – a number that is expected to grow by at least 10% during our 2018-2019 fiscal year.
- The Child Witness Program – provides advocacy and support for children and youth, and their families, who are victims or witnesses of abuse or crime as they journey through the judicial

system when charges have been laid. In our fiscal 2016-2017, the Child Witness Program supported 665 young people from across Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County and we expect to support more than 800 children and youth in our 2018-2019 fiscal year.

- Youth Symposium – this annual event, held on two consecutive days, welcomes more than 3,000 Grade 8 students and their teachers from Waterloo Region, Guelph and Wellington County to hear inspiring speakers speak on topics that include healthy dating, global citizenship and goal setting. Since its start in 2004, the Youth Symposium has welcomed more than 30,000 students.

About the Child Witness Centre:

The vision of the Child Witness Centre is a community where children and youth are safe, valued and heard, empowering them toward strong futures. Our caring, compassionate professionals walk with young people, and their families, through the criminal justice process, helping them have a voice and fostering healing, hope and wellbeing.

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