

Giving back to the community

Community Foundation grant deadline is Oct. 7



**ROSS
MCINTYRE**
COMMUNITY

The origin story of the Community Foundation of Orillia and Area (CFOA) is an interesting one that dates to 1999. Jim Dykes, entrepreneur and president of the Madison County Food and Beverage Company, was at a dinner meeting and began sharing his newfound interest in community foundations. He explained and explored the concept until another person present threw \$20 into a breadbasket on the table and said, “Here’s some money

— just go start one.”

That is just what Jim did with help of Ken Koyama, then-publisher of the Packet & Times, and Pat Campbell of Casino Rama. It was launched Jan. 7, 1999, with a \$200,000 gift from Casino Rama, along with a challenge issued by the casino for the community to match that initial donation. If they succeeded, the casino would make another donation. The CFOA had more than \$450,000 in endowed assets in the early stages of its formation.

What Jim Dykes, and all those who helped in this early success, saw in the concept of community foundations likely still holds true today. According to Community Foundations of Canada, the 191 community foundations across the country are “connected by a national network to help Canadians

invest in building strong and resilient places to live, work and play.”

This is accomplished by investing donations and granting investment income earned on these funds to community groups in need of support. The model is simple, but the work involved in a successful community foundation like the CFOA requires a broad skill set comprised of dedicated volunteers and administration.

Carol Benedetti is often the first point of contact for the CFOA.

“(The CFOA) really does respond to community need,” said Benedetti. “People involved in the CFOA are members of the community and they have the insight on how these funds can contribute to community wellness.”

This goal of building community is reflected in the wide range of recipient organizations, includ-

ing Couchiching Jubilee House, the Orillia Youth Centre and The Sharing Place food bank, to name a few out of the more than 100 organizations that have received financial support from the CFOA.

Part of the reason the CFOA appeals to both donors and recipient organizations is because it offers local, meaningful impact. Donors to the CFOA are able to direct their donation to a specific area and their donation constitutes a long-term approach to charitable giving. As the CFOA helps remove financial barriers to non-profits, these recipient organizations are empowered to provide new programs or resources directly to our community.

“Community foundations make it very easy to direct donations,” said Benedetti. “Donors can create a new fund or direct the donation

to an existing fund.”

The CFOA has three granting periods throughout the year, and the fall grant deadline is Oct. 7. Charitable organizations are encouraged to apply to the CFOA for funding and it is recommended they consult with Benedetti on their application.

Interested organizations can email info@communityfoundation.ca or call 705-325-4903, ext 207.

Ross McIntyre is a director at Camp Couchiching and the Couchiching Community Initiative. He is passionate about outdoor education and community building. This column profiles community organizations dedicated to Orillia and opportunities for local youth engagement. If you have a column idea, email rossmcintyre@gmail.com.