

The ROCKWOOD Miller

Sounds of Support rocks Lloyd Dyer Park in Rockwood

By: Vivien Fleisher

Describing the process of sponsoring a family from Syria as an odd mix of “rushing and waiting”, Barrie Hill United Church member Dave Wright said that despite the lengthy process, all concerns and frustrations melted away when the family of six

arrived two weeks ago. Members of the Guelph Eramosa Refugee Sponsorship Program are thrilled, and things have so far worked out extremely well.

Wright and wife Raina said it was a great learning experience that reinforced their appreciation for what we have in Canada.

These same sentiments were echoed later during opening remarks by Guelph Eramosa Mayor Chris White and Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott on Saturday at the welcoming event, ‘Sounds of Support’, at Lloyd Dyer Park. In association with Hillside Music Festival, the evening featured hours



of live music, food and celebration, to honour the sponsored family. Mayor White welcomed them and commended the group for its efforts, acknowledging that fundraising is “difficult at best” and that their efforts “go to the heart of our community...that we can pull something like this together.”

Before arriving two weeks ago, Hussein, his wife and four children had lived in a refugee camp in Lebanon for a year. They were housed temporarily at the University of Guelph when they landed in Canada and are now residing in Guelph where services are more prevalent and accessible.

Wright said the support has been great all the way around, like Red Car providing free pickup from Pearson. Though he finds government hard to follow at times—throughout the entire process they were never given an idea when the family would arrive—the whole experience has been hugely gratifying.



École Harris Mill's Husky Helpers with the new 'Buddy Bench'. At the back, principal Carrie Conrad (left), UGDSB's Krista Pederson, and speaker Myrna Hutchison. - Vivien Fleisher photo

École Harris Mill receives Buddy Bench

By: Vivien Fleisher

Students at Rockwood's École Harris Mill School were the lucky recipients recently of a bright red bench for their schoolyard, a joint gift from Arthur resident Myrna Hutchison and Upper Grand District School Board, represented by Teacher's Federation VP Krista Pederson. No ordinary bench, it is inscribed with a hashtag #getintouchforhutch, and the lacrosse number of Hutchison's son Steven, who died in 2013 by suicide. Five months after he died, Hutchison channelled her grief by encouraging students to help one another when struggling with their feelings. Steven had not been diagnosed with mental illness, so his passing came as a complete shock, motivating Hutchison to raise awareness early in children's lives about the importance of not hiding their feelings. Stats on the website state that 24 per cent of deaths among 15 to 24 year olds are by suicide.

Myrna spoke to students about the importance of sharing difficult feelings, stopping short of sharing her own tragedy. She drew on Pixar's 2015

animated children's film 'Inside Out' throughout her presentation, which uses different coloured characters for each emotion experienced by main character Riley who struggles with a major life change: moving far from her home. Taking place in Riley's head for the entire movie, it highlights that complex emotions are often invisible to others. Riley's parents are concerned, but can't help her if she doesn't share. The bench symbolizes the importance of sitting down and opening up when feeling overwhelmed. The scale and color make it a schoolyard beacon designed to help erase the stigma of mental illness.

Hutchison was named Arthur's Outstanding Citizen in 2014. The following year, her family came up with the idea for a bench for the St. John's school in Arthur, with the message #Never-Along. The feedback was so great, they knew they were on to a good thing. To date, 19 benches have been placed in UGDSB and two in Arthur, funded jointly through school boards, schools and the group's fundraising efforts. For more info go to www.getintouchforhutch.com

Co-Living for seniors in Rockwood

By: Jane Dougan

When Janette Ledwith relocated to a “big old house” in Rockwood, she knew what she wanted to name it: Oak Hill. She didn't know it would become the foundation for an innovative approach to housing for active seniors, 55 plus. Colleagues Anne Snell and Elisabeth Hines formed the Rockwood Co-Living Interest Group in 2014 after sharing future concerns about affordable housing. By 2016, the expanded Group was ready to find a site for the model they envisaged: affordable, with a reduced ecological footprint, built around a new definition of ‘family’ that supported neighbourly co-care amongst like-minded seniors. It would

not be “an alternative nursing home.” It would be a supportive base for both independent living and group support—“a whole new adventure ... about what it means to be an elder.” Ledwith had been to some information meetings but when Anne and Elisabeth approached her first-hand at home, “it just clicked that this was where this new community could form.”

Ground has already been broken on planned renovations—new insulation, new wiring, new plumbing together with expanded living areas on the adjoining lot—with a goal of completion by this fall. Oak Hill Co-Living will house six adults with equal buy-in on the property, allowing for continued real es-

tate equity. There will be six spacious bed-sitting rooms, each with a private fully-accessible bathroom, and shared common living areas: kitchen, laundry, dining room, living-room and garden. A separate living room and guest suite will allow family gatherings. Everything is planned for ‘aging-in-place’ in community. Two people have confirmed; the group is open to applications from anyone who fits the 55 plus age criteria; male, female, couples—the bottom line is finding people who are “the right fit” in outlook and goals. The only non-negotiable so far is no smoking within the home. For more information, visit oakhillcoliving.com or call Elisabeth Hines at 226-343-4302.



Rockwood Co-Living Interest Group members Bonnie Mullen (left), Elisabeth Hines, Janette Ledwith and Anne Snell anticipate a move-in date for Oak Hill in Rockwood by the fall 2017.