

Caregiving Matters is gem of a resource

By Mark Pavilons

Driven by heart, King-based Caregiving Matters has become a valuable resource for caregivers worldwide. Founder and chair Mary Bart said they created an ideal platform for their largely online service. Run by volunteers, the Kettleby organization doesn't have to worry about bricks and mortar office space or salaries. They do what need to be done. All of the current volunteers are either current or former caregivers themselves, so their advice comes from front-line expertise. Bart said they use technology to reach a



s many people as they can. They leverage technologies in everything they do, ensuring greater reach and sustainability. The bulk of their services include educational and support through online articles, webinars, videos, podcasts and a large resource directory. Volunteers also conduct public workshops and presentations. Boosted by a \$12,000 provincial grant, Caregiving Matters is creating the ABCs of Caregiving to Seniors. This project, Bart said, will include a workshop at the King City Seniors Centre Oct. 13 (more details to follow). It's meant to be a free, intergenerational public education program to benefit caregivers, families and seniors. Bart also won't shy away from some tough current issues, and addresses them head-on. The grant was part of the Seniors Community Grants, which support projects that help seniors find volunteer opportunities, engage in life-long learning, and stay active. This year, the program has been expanded to support larger projects that will reach even more seniors across the province. The program was expanded this year and for the first time, some organizations received up to \$100,000 for projects that are larger in scope and benefit more seniors over a longer period of time. As highlighted in Aging with Confidence: Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors, new investments in the Seniors Community Grant program will allow it to further expand and reach more seniors across the province. ?Congratulations to all the recipients of this year's Seniors Community Grant funding. I am inspired by your tremendous dedication to keep Ontario seniors active and engaged and I look forward to seeing your projects come to life. I also want to thank all the organizations who submitted an application. The volume and quality of applications we received this year more than justifies our decision to continue to grow the program in years to come,? said Dipika Damerla, Minister of Seniors Affairs. Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP?Oak Ridges-Markham and Minister of Health and Long-term Care, was also pleased. ?Supporting healthy, active seniors here in Oak Ridges-Markham and across the province is a priority for our government. Through the Seniors Community Grant program, seniors are benefitting from projects and programs that connect them to their communities through local events, classes, and volunteer opportunities,? she said. Ontario is investing up to \$4.1 million to support up to 246 projects through the Seniors Community Grant program. With this recent announcement, the total investment in the program is now up to \$11.8 million, benefitting approximately 500,000 seniors across the province. The Caregiving Matters website was launched in 2008 to offer a forum for peer support allowing caregivers to share their stories, their journeys and celebrate the lives and gifts of loved ones. In 2012, they became ?Caregiving Matters? to better reflect the importance of family caregiving.

For more, visit caregivingmatters.ca