

OPPYF – Director’s Report June 11, 2020 delivered at AGM via Zoom meeting

The past 12 months, we have experienced tumultuous change in society which has directly affected our ability to directly interact with the youth of Ontario. Despite these setbacks, we will continue to move forward to help develop our youth and provide them with a better future. There is no doubt that going forward, “business as usual” will not be as usual and we must be aware of communications trends and applications to keep “in touch” with the entire OPPYF community and stakeholders.

At this time, it is still not clear when our school system will resume normal or near-normal operations. Once schools are back on track, we will closely monitor the number of times the YDF is accessed as there may be a need to remind some Community Services Officers and others that the Fund remains operative. Year over year, the YDF saw growth as the program became well known and we will continue to see that growth once school systems are back on track.

In the Fall of 2019, we began what should be a very successful bicycle gift program. In cooperation with the Commissioner and many other police officers who rode from the Ontario Police College to the Police Memorial in Ottawa, we provided bikes and helmets to ten worthy youth with thanks going to Frank and Ruby Ryder for their coordination efforts. Our Board members were in attendance at several of these events to represent the OPPYF and were thrilled to see the responses from the youth and their families. In our 2019 fall meeting, we received a presentation from Andrew Hibma of New Hope Community Bikes in Hamilton which may result in further partnerships in an effort to provide bikes to deserving youth.

For most of 2019, we continued to see growth in the Youth Development Fund but due to COVID 19, there was a marked decline in youth being identified. This can be attributed to school cancellations and social distancing impacts. I am hopeful that the 2020/21 academic year will see an increase in youth being identified. We may need to increase our awareness with Detachment personnel if we don’t see an uptake in the YDF in line with schools reopening.

Again, this year the Annual OPP K9 Calendar fundraising program saw strong sales and widespread community interest in receiving one of the calendars. Work continues on the 2021 calendar which promises to be a year of record-breaking sales.

Chris Seeley is actively pursuing names for the upcoming Bursary Awards but, given the impacts of COVID 19, an extension was approved to provide Detachments more time to identify high school candidates.

We were unable to secure camp positions this summer but in light of the restrictions, camp attendance has been restricted or cancelled across the Province. Looking forward to 2021, we look to move forward on securing camp positions in cooperation and with support from Tim Hortons.

The OPP Youth Foundation website development continues to evolve with some innovative layouts and user/visitor friendly features. A robust and user-friendly website is vital in today’s online reality where there is a great deal of competition by organizations vying for public attention.

The Pathway of Memories remains in good hands with Dave Osborne and crew where it was decided to postpone the ceremony penciled in for this Fall until 2021.

Efforts have been ongoing to try doing the impossible – to fill Kevin’s role with the OPPYF. Late breaking news is very encouraging as Sandra Poredos and Debbie Woodhouse have joined our meeting today to learn more about the OPPYF and our operation.

As OPP Detachment personnel raise money funds for various causes, they are looking for a transparent system of fund management. The OPPYF continues to provide this service having recently agreed to manage funds for the Nottawasaga OPP Youth Program and Northeast Region OPP Bus Program For Youth. Speaking from experience at the Detachment level, the OPPYF is providing this necessary and vital service especially during these times of close police scrutiny.

With our YDF, Bursary Awards and Camps all supported by the new website, the OPPYF will continue to provide the disadvantaged youth of Ontario with supports that will make a difference in their lives.

Dave Lee, Inspector (retired) O.P.P.  
Chair, OPP Youth Foundation