

OPP Youth Foundation Executive Director's Report – June 2024

The year 2023 continued to be a year of change for most charitable organizations. The Ontario Provincial Police Youth Foundation (OPPYF) is no exception.

I have been in the Executive Director's position (volunteer) for over a year now and I take the leadership role as an honour and a privilege. The face of our board is changing. We have new committee members; more volunteers; with an increased awareness within the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) and the communities the OPP serve. We have also seen some of our founding members retire from the active board of directors and I would be remised if I did not acknowledge the contributions those members have had on this foundation.

Directors and volunteers are proudly representing the OPP Youth Foundation at community events such as the Tour de Force in North East Region, Golf Tournaments in Central and West Region, Regional Command meetings in the North West and engaging with Community Officers in West and East Regions by presenting at meetings.

Numerous presentations have been made to Auxiliary classes, Cadet classes and we even have a representative that meets with both recruit classes and retirement seminars to spread awareness of the OPP Youth Foundation.

Social media is paramount in sharing information and we have greatly increased awareness of the Foundation through our YF Facebook posts as well as sharing OPP Region's posts where uniformed members are engaging with youth. Efforts are currently highlighting the Pathway of Memories and Milestones program to increase interest and awareness of this important fundraising project. Family and Veterans' Days that were held this past week brought awareness of the OPPYF and also showcased our main projects. Appreciation to Brenda Evans for taking on the Communications portfolio and updating the website. Brenda has also shared her bilingual skills as our FB posts are now in both English and French.

We now have our branding on a professional outdoor tent and tablecloth; and we have our YF Flags proudly on display at OPP GHQ at the Pathway of Memories and Milestones (PoMM) display. In addition, thanks to our unofficial youth advisor, (Nate) we have age-appropriate swag with the YF logo. This provides the

opportunity for young people to take our branding home and if inquisitive, the parent will go online to learn more about the OPPYF.

Brent Young, the Chair on the PoM committee along with the team have worked to increase donations to this Legacy project. As the June 30th deadline for new stone donations approach for installation in August 2024, the members continue to seek out and receive new applications. The dedication ceremony in September will see an increase in attendees as the 2023 ceremony doubled in size. New stones being placed in the Pathway celebrate years of service, milestones, life events such as retirements, promotion and class graduations. Brent Young, Dave Osborne, Bridget Higgins, Kevin Lehman, Sherri DeGroot and myself can often be seen out on the Pathway, with weed removal tools, shovels, edger or broom in hand, guaranteeing that it receives the care and attention that it deserves and is respectfully presentable at all times. The rebranding of the Pathway to the Pathway of Memories and Milestones will help to clarify the donated stones are a true celebration of those that have past as well as those that have contributed to the OPP and are present to enjoy the flag terrace.

Another great result was achieved through the 2024 OPP Canine Calendar fundraiser campaign with OPPYF taking the lead with members of the K9 unit and Corporate Communications and the OPP Shop. The funds raised are equally shared between OPPYF and Friends of the OPP Museum and a small portion to Ned's Wish, a retirement fund dedicated to caring for retired service canines. A key partnership with the YF, Friends of the OPP Museum, OPP Canine Unit, Rama Central School, the OPP Auxiliary Program and OPP Corporate Communications put on a calendar launch like no other. Many thanks again to Dave Osborne and Kevin Lehman for all they do to make this fundraiser the success it has been.

The Youth Development Fund continues to provide much needed funds to youth in need of assistance to achieve their dreams and goals. Frank Ryder and the YDF committee of highly dedicated volunteers continue to forge ahead with efforts to reach more and more of these young people. It's the definition of success when we see reports stating the examples of where youth were assisted by this fund. This committee has a very short turnaround for applications and is a key point of their success. Thank you to this committee for their commitment to making a difference.

The initial trial of the Detachment Community Event Fund is also appearing to be the success it was expected to be. Youth engagement has been a priority in the communities the OPP serve and this provides funding to assist detachment personnel with this initiative.

The Tour de Force Cycling Series started out to be a challenge this year. We understand the format changed and OPP Youth Foundation is now one of four charities benefiting from this event. We are proud to continue our partnership, however we have learned that the OPP is not the lead of the event, but one of a committee which includes other police services. It was planned / approved that five youths would receive bicycles and helmets at each of the four events, however we were disappointed to learn no young people were chosen for the first event in Hamilton / Haldimand area. We have also learned only two youth will be chosen for the upcoming event at OPP GHQ in Orillia, two in the East event and two at the NE / NW Region event held on Manitoulin Island. We look forward to having representatives at these events as we expand awareness of the OPPYF and support the cycling series.

We had another successful bursary year with all bursary funds being expended in helping 14 youths across the province realize their post-secondary ambitions. Thank you to Bursary committee Co-Chairs Chris Seeley and Lynda Cranney for their perseverance in ensuring all bursary options were fulfilled.

In closing, I would like to personally thank our Youth Foundation Administrator, Kevin Lehman for his countless hours dedicated to the foundation. Kevin not only ensures all accounts are balanced and up to date, he converses with all directors to ensure everyone has the information necessary to move forward in decision making, answers external questions regarding the foundation, presented to OPP GHQ and recently attended London in West Region to address two conferences. Kevin is often in the background, but we know he is involved in every initiative we take on. Thank you for being the lead in updating the ONCA Bylaws which were required to be completed by this AGM and congratulations for your recognition from Commissioner Carrique.

Thank you, fellow directors and volunteers for making our 2023/24 AGM Year a success as we grow together to make a difference, one youth at a time.

Sandy Poredos
Executive Director
OPP Youth Foundation