

Group for people with eating disorders gets grant

BY LEILA SPEISMAN

Eating Disorders of York Region (EDOYR) has received a \$125,500 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

The award, recently presented by Thornhill MPP Peter Shurman and Trillium Foundation volunteer Gary Gladstone at a reception at Thornhill Square, will be paid over three years.

EDOYR, a not-for-profit organization, was founded in 2004 by a group of parents and friends whose families had been affected by eating disorders, mainly anorexia and bulimia. It was to be primarily a support group, but also intended to seek increased government support and assistance for people with these diseases.

Meetings were held in various locations until last September, when permanent facilities were opened at Thornhill Square.

Janice Morgante, executive director of EDOYR, said the grant was to pay for staff, an executive director, two facilitators and part of the rent for the offices.

"The idea is to help organizations get on their feet," she said, not to be permanent funding. The foundation helps define and carry out a graduated series of goals.

EDOYR has held a number of public information nights, which, Morgante said, have been well received. It has gone to schools, established a resource centre and library, and held programs. It has also organized support groups, therapy groups, open forums and special events.

Telephone referral lines and help lines have provided information and help to an increasing number of people, she said. The website has been beefed up, more volunteers have been recruited.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ontario government, provides grants to charitable and not-for-profit organizations working in the fields of arts and culture, sports and recreation, the environment, and human and social services.

One of the requirements for the grant is more fundraising. Every year, Morgante said, the organization holds Wings of Hope, a gala and silent auction. Last year's event raised \$50,000, she said, and plans are underway for the 2008 program, A Salute to the Sensational Sixties, to be held in November.

A media release stresses that eating disorders, "contrary to popular belief, do not have anything to do with food or weight. They are unhealthy coping strategies that are adopted to help the individual deal with underlying stressors that are too difficult or painful to approach head on."

Eating disorders, the realize asserts, "are devastating, life-threatening illnesses that have severe physical and psychological ramifications for individuals and their families."

In fact, the daughter of one of the founders of EDOYR died last month from complications of what speakers at her funeral called "this insidious disease."

For more information, call 905-886-6632, e-mail info@edoyr.com, or go to the website www.edoyr.com

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