

## Welcoming Arms honoured for Community Leadership in Aurora



As inflation continues to rise and even the basics have become less affordable, Aurora's Welcoming Arms is stepping up to help local residents make ends meet.

The ecumenical organization, which provides a number of initiatives, including two weekly meal programs, for community members in need, was honoured by the Town of Aurora with the 2022 Community Leadership Award, part of the Town's Community Recognition Awards program. Awarded at Town Hall last spring, the award is presented to an individual or organization that has significantly enhanced the Town through their contribution, commitment and leadership in the areas of charitable giving, civic engagement, community events, or community spirit.

Tonight's award is being presented to Welcoming Arms, which has been serving those in need in Aurora since 2006, said event emcee Erin Cerenzia, Manager of Neighbourhood Network. Welcoming Arms is a true community leader and supporter. The services that Welcoming Arms offer have continued even throughout the pandemic and will continue into the future. For those of you who don't have the privilege of knowing this amazing charity just as a quick example: During the COVID-19 pandemic, as the numbers of people in need in our community have skyrocketed, this small but mighty group of volunteers have found a way to meet this need, to grow, to engage with local businesses, volunteers, donors, to provide support to Aurorans who are in true need through their community meal programs.

Every Wednesday evening, the volunteers at Welcoming Arms serve approximately 150 people from our community, allowing them a hot meal, a full belly, and great company. In addition, these volunteers also serve approximately 50 people a hot lunch every Thursday and these efforts have continued before, during and will continue after the pandemic.

Welcoming Arms is also part of the team that helps host the Christmas Dream Dinner, a warm, celebratory meal, open on Christmas Day to all those who cannot afford to provide one themselves or who might be spending Christmas alone. This special dinner started over two decades ago and continues to be a staple in the Aurora community. Their community support doesn't stop at meals. Welcoming Arms also partners with accountants each year who volunteer their time and knowledge to help those in need with free tax clinics. Welcoming Arms truly cares and takes care of those in our community who need a helping hand.

Accepting the award on behalf of the organization via video link was Board member Doug Steele who highlighted the meal programs Welcome Table and Martha's Table, and their community outreach program, Bridging the Gap.

We are very grateful for the Town for recognizing what we do and we love what we do, he said.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter