

Raising awareness of addiction the main focus of Andrew Robinson Memorial Golf Tournament



By Nate SmelleWith 2022 now in the rear view mirror and the new year just getting underway, Vera Robinson is already hard at work from her home base on Papineau Lake with preparations for the third annual Andrew Robinson Memorial Golf Tournament. As a way to honour the memory of her son Andrew who passed away of an overdose on Sept. 23, 2020, Robinson decided to organize the annual fundraising event for Vitanova.

Based in Vaughan, the Vitanova Foundation ? the rehabilitation centre where Andrew Robinson received care ? offers a wide variety of services and support for individuals and families struggling with addiction. Recognizing how helpful the foundation was for both Andrew and herself as he fought to overcome addiction, she said it is vital for those immersed in their own battle to know that there is assistance available for free.

?People are very discouraged when they find out they have to wait for three months, or six months, or nine months to get into a treatment centre; and that it's going to be \$5,000 or \$10,000 a month,? explained Robinson. ?People are dying on the streets every single day, because there is no help for them. I know that there are problems in Bancroft, Barry's Bay, everywhere! The world is experiencing problems with opiates, so getting the word out there is important in order to keep the doors open. This is my way of honouring my son, bringing awareness to my new community that I live in.?

According to Robinson, more than \$70,000 was raised at the second annual Andrew Robinson Golf Tournament last September. Of the funds raised, she said \$43,150 will go towards sponsoring someone in need of Vitanova's services and support. The remaining

\$26,904 will go towards the Andrew Robinson Scholarship. Robinson said the scholarship fund is available to anyone in Ontario who is in recovery and interested in furthering their education.

More information regarding the Andrew Robinson Scholarship fund can be found on Vitanova's website at: www.vitanova.ca.

'It's about changing someone's life, giving them an opportunity, giving them something they have to look forward to,' Robinson said. 'When people enter treatment they are not in a good headspace. Some of them are barely alive. Some of them are just coming from detox. Some of them have been on a drug run for weeks, months, or years off and on. They are not in a happy place.'

Having been there at her son's side as he faced his addiction head on, Robinson understands how difficult it is 'to pick yourself up off the ground and walk into a place for treatment, while giving up something you thought you needed to live on; knowing you can never have a drink again, or you can never use that drug again.'

Speaking from her personal experience, she continued, 'I am not an addict, so I don't have addiction issues. I used to say to my son sometimes 'I know how hard it is.' And he would correct me and say, 'Mom, you don't know how hard it is.' And I would have to remind myself that he was absolutely right. I feel like I have lived a life through him, and all those years of trying to save my son was nothing compared to what he tried to do - him trying to save himself. There's a saying, 'Hate the disease, not the addict.' If you think it's hard watching a loved one, imagine how hard it is living it. That's why they say to face it one day at a time.'

Noting that 'Over 18,000 people have gone through their doors in 35 years to receive the treatment that they require at no cost,' Robinson said she is determined to let 'let our community up here know about Vitanova.'

'Yes, the golf tournament is about honouring Andrew; yes it's about raising money for Vitanova and the scholarship, but most importantly it's to let people know that there is a free treatment program for any man or woman living in Ontario to access.'

The third annual Andrew Robinson Charity Golf Tournament is scheduled for Sept. 16 at the Harbour View Golf and Country Club near Barrie. Acknowledging that they are still looking for prizes for the Silent Auction and raffle, Robinson said anyone interested in making a donation, supporting, or getting involved with the event can contact Robinson by email at: zena_tkw@hotmail.com; or by phone at: 416-998-6495.