

Pandemic proves challenging for local fish hatchery



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By Chris Drost

Last year, the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery's 13th annual Pig Roast/ Fish Fry and Auction really was lucky with 340 people attending and approximately \$25,000 raised. This year, the board of directors have had to cancel the event initially planned for July 18. While this change in plans may seem like a loss of yet another fun event in the community that many looked forward to each year, the loss goes a lot deeper than that. The funds raised during this event have traditionally provided the annual operating funds for the hatchery. The board decided that even if physical distancing is relaxed by July, large groups of people coming together will probably still be prohibited. Secondly, we could not in good conscience collect prizes from our local business community that is in its own fight to stay afloat, says chair Kevin Vance. The hatchery, just like other not-for-profits in the community that have infrastructure to look after, is starting to look for alternate ways to raise the funds necessary to keep their facility on good footing. The hydro bill still has to be paid, taxes come due, repairs to equipment are necessary and the fish still have to be fed. Since the hatchery relies totally on volunteers to run the operation, it does not qualify for any of the recently announced emergency benefits based on wage subsidies and because it is owned rather than rented, neither does the commercial rent benefit apply to them. We are reaching out to the community who helped build the fish hatchery, says Vance. Their website, www.fishhatchery.ca has been updated so those who are able to offer a donation can do so directly from the homepage by paying through Pay Pal. For those who prefer it, e-transfers can be sent to accounting@fishhatchery.ca (include name, amount and mailing address in the comment line) or send a cheque to the NHC FH at Box 487 Bancroft, ON K0L 1C0. We are hoping the community will dig as deep as it is able to help keep the facility going through this very challenging year, added Vance. Each year the NHC FH grows local fish, a strain of trout called the jewel trout, and brook trout that are released in lakes across the region. It is intended as an economic development initiative aimed at rebuilding sport fishing in the area. This project has been described as asset-based community development at its best. Community members came together using their expertise, the property where the hatchery is located was donated, and

volunteers have spent countless hours growing fish and stocking lakes. Once again, this initiative is depending on the community to step up and help raise the shortfall in operational funding for 2020 with the hope that by next year, everyone can get together and enjoy the resurrection of the annual dinner and auction.