

Trent Researchers Donate Award Prize to Abbeyfield Lakefield

BY TERRI WILLIAMS

Three Trent University researchers have won the inaugural Trent University Research Impact Award and have donated the \$500 award to local charity Abbeyfield House Society of Lakefield.

The Award, which was presented to the winners May 5th at a virtual ceremony, honours researchers or research teams stewarding original and impactful research that has contributed significantly to society on a local, regional, national or international scale.

The Rural Aging Research Program managed by Dr. Mark Skinner, Dr. Elizabeth Russell and Amber Colibaba won the Award. The research team has been working together since 2016 on research projects that examine rural age-friendly initiatives and the factors that may help or hinder their sustainability. They have also explored older voluntarism in rural communities including doing a project last year on how older volunteers are coping with changes associated with the pandemic and the pandemic's implications for older voluntarism. Several senior volunteers in Lakefield were interviewed for the research, including members of Lakefield Abbeyfield's Board of Directors.

"Receiving the inaugural Research Impact Award, for me, is an absolute honour," said Dr. Elizabeth Russell who is also the Director of the Trent Centre for Aging and Society.

"We are proud to be able to donate our award (\$500) to Abbeyfield House Society of Lakefield, in recognition of their wonderful initiative that will support many older adults locally in the years to come, and also in honour of all of the community partners we have worked with over the years."

"Through our Rural Aging Research Program, we are grateful for the opportunity to work with such inspiring community partners in the Peterborough region, all working towards supporting rural older adults," said Dr. Skinner.

Trent University and Dr. Russell in particular have been very supportive of Abbeyfield Lakefield for many years.

Four of Dr. Russell's students conducted an initial study about community support for the Abbeyfield model in 2017. Nearly 100 people participated in the study. More than three quarters of them felt there was a lack of retirement housing options in Lakefield. The research identified three themes for successful shared retirement housing: affordability, maintaining independence and companionship. The Abbeyfield model offers all three. In an Abbeyfield house residents are part of a community, living together balancing privacy, companionship, security and independence with private suites and common areas. Run as a not-for-profit, it is also much more affordable than traditional retirement homes. The research showed that an Abbeyfield House would certainly be welcomed in Lakefield.

Abbeyfield Lakefield bought a 4-acre property on Ermatinger Street in Lakefield in January and is now working with local government and agencies to plan the build of a new house on the property that will be a home for 12-14 local seniors.

The donation was a nice surprise for the charity as the group is currently in need of funding to cover planning costs.

"The donation is greatly appreciated by everyone at Abbeyfield. We are methodically working through the planning process for our build and the funds will be put to good use for sure," said Abbeyfield Lakefield President Ron Black.

"It is very gratifying to think that Trent Centre for Aging and Society holds the AHSL in such high regard. Gestures such as this also make our efforts so worthwhile, and encourages us all to continue towards achieving our goal," said Abbeyfield Lakefield founder Dewi Jones. Anyone interested in supporting Abbeyfield Lakefield can visit the website at www.abbeyfieldlakefield.ca

Terri Williams, CFP® is a consumer advocate and personal finance specialist currently enjoying semi-retirement in Lakefield. She is a member of the Ontario Securities Commission's Seniors Expert Advisory Committee and sits on the Board of Directors of Abbeyfield House Society of Lakefield