

THE *Do Good Divas*

DOING GOOD AND CATCHING
DREAMS FOR A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY

STORY BY LORI NEWTON

What local woman could possibly resist the call to become a Do Good Diva? As it turns out, not very many. Over 75 women—and even a handful of men—jumped at the opportunity to become “divafied” by joining this exciting new, local non profit service club that started with three friends with a dream in June.

Founders Gale Simko-Hatfield, her next door neighbour Barb Holland, and Lucy Fanson have been overwhelmed by the positive response their new non profit organization is receiving from the community, and they have kicked off their inaugural do good project with a \$50,000 pledge to Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital to refurbish the Adult Day Surgery waiting area.

The three friends have an impressive history of working together to organize a number of successful community fundraising events in the past, and when Simko-Hatfield recently retired, the three agreed that they wanted to continue to organize fundraising events. “We enjoyed working together on fun fundraising events,” says Gale. “We had a great time and the community benefited.” So this past June, the trio registered their new non-profit group they called the Do Good Divas with a mandate to help improve healthcare in our community.

Gale Simko-Hatfield says that when it came time to choose a cause, they approached Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital with a request for a suitable project. “We didn’t want to just be cutting cheques,” she explains. “We wanted a hands-on project that we could be actively involved in so we get to see the results of what we are doing.” The group is very excited to be starting with the hospital Day Surgery waiting room project, and given the incredible support they have been receiving, the community is equally excited.

There was never any question about the major fundraising event that would help support the project. Gale had been the creative force behind Handbag Heaven, a handbag themed event geared to women that has enjoyed incredible support in the community, and the three women knew they wanted to build on that event but make a few changes. Thus, Diva Delights was born—maintaining the handbag theme but now to include fashions and flowers to round out all the things Divas love!

Cathy Piazza, Manager of the Day Surgery program, could not be more thrilled about the project. She says that there is a dire need to renovate the waiting area space that leaves patients and their loved ones out in an open hallway with no privacy while they wait (and some days, wait and wait) for their surgery.



Heaven in a Handbag! CBET weather specialist Tara Weber shares a fundraising laugh with Do Good Diva Gale Simko-Hatfield as the Divas reach out to support a revamped Adult Day Surgery waiting area at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital.

Cathy explains that as the area’s lead trauma centre, the Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital Operating Room Suites can get backed up due to unexpected emergencies and unfortunate circumstances that occur. When that happens, patients and their families can find themselves with longer waits than expected. Cathy says that her own family has had first hand experience of this so she can personally attest to the positive impact this project will have on the care and comfort of the patients and their families waiting for a procedure. “Revitalizing this area by creating a pleasant and comfortable environment for patients and their families as they wait for medical treatment is long overdue,” she says, and she and her team are enormously grateful to the Do Good Divas for taking on this important project.

The transformation will be significant, and includes the purchase of comfortable theatre style seating, the addition of window coverings, ambient lighting, soft colours of paint for the walls, and a new floor. According to Cathy Piazza, the best aspect of this renovation project is the ability for them to create an area where females who are changed and ready for surgery can have the option to sit with other females only!

“My dream was to see this task accomplished during my time as the Manager of Day Surgery...so the Do Good Divas are also ‘dream catchers’ and I personally thank them,” exclaimed a beaming ▶

Cathy during the official announcement earlier this month.

Over 600 tickets have been sold for the Diva Delights evening that will take place at the Caboto Club on Thursday, October 25th, and literally hundreds of fabulous handbags have been pouring into the Simko-Hatfield home to ensure that the main attraction—the auctioning off of fabulous handbags donated by celebrities, designers, retailers and leading women of the community—will be a huge success.

The group has been thankful for the numerous local businesses that have generously come on board as sponsors. The Divas are very grateful to the Windsor Family Credit Union which came on early as a full cash sponsor at the top level, and to Edcom Multimedia Products who will be providing a very generous package of services for the evening's festivities. Tim Hortons will also be on hand to set up a complimentary coffee bar that will accompany the sweet table that Gale says will be divaliciously heavy on chocolate desserts that have been generously donated by about a dozen local bakeries and pastry chefs.

“The support has just been amazing,” exclaims Hatfield-Simko. “We are anticipating making this our signature event to continue to raise much needed funds to improve health care for the residents of Windsor and Essex County...and the best part is that all the money we raise in our community will stay in our community!”

Gale believes that Diva Delights will not only be a great fundraising event but that it will also provide a great opportunity for area women to get together for a fun and relaxed evening where they can reconnect with friends and colleagues...and maybe pick up a desirable new handbag (and what woman won't love that?).

The Divas are all about friendship and volunteerism and they are looking to include all women, from retired grandmothers to high school students, professionals, and stay-at-home moms. In that spirit, a Christmas social event has been planned for November that will offer members an informal evening of casual, live rock 'n roll music and a full turkey dinner—a great opportunity to enjoy a good time and to get to know one another. WL

For more information on how to become a Diva, email them at dogooddivas@mdi-rect.net, or phone 519-735-0211.

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