

## **Creating a legacy: Second annual Mayor's Gala boosts awareness for Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation**

January 20, 2011

**Tori Sutton**

*Staff Reporter*

It was a night to give back to the community and raise some funds to make its future brighter. The second annual Mayor's Gala in support of the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation (SPCCF) was held at the Festival Theatre last Friday, attracting a sold-out crowd of over 300 people.

Hosted by Mayor Dan Mathieson and Stratford city council – along with mayors from across Perth County – the Mayor's Gala is the sole event to raise funds to help cover the Community Foundation's operating costs.

It was also a chance for the Community Foundation to announce its 2010 grant recipients.

"This is a great event for the community and the grant recipients," said Mathieson.

"The slogan of the foundation is 'Connecting people that care with projects that matter' and tonight is a continuation of that."

The Community Foundation is picking up momentum, he said, something that's evident by the number of funds being created. There are 27 different funds, which shows 27 different families or organizations have felt the need to create a legacy within the community and give back, Mathieson said.

"As more people learn about the foundation they will either donate to a fund, start their own, or give philanthropically to different parts of the community," he added.

And his own family has taken that to heart. The 2010 recipient of the Mathieson Family Fund is the Hero Project, which aims to help elementary students develop good character. It received \$1,200.

"That was a direct result of my parents bringing up nine of us, and my aunt and uncle wanting to do something special in the community," Mathieson said, of the creation of his family's fund. "I'm just so proud to see nine of us came together and saw this as a good vehicle."

In total, 10 grant recipients were celebrated at the gala. Along with the Hero Project, other recipients included the Kiwanis Festival of the Performing Arts, Listowel Minor Hockey, Little Falls Public School, the Perth District Health Unit, Romeo Public School, the Salvation Army, the Stratford Public Library, the Upper Avon River Conservation Club and the Perth Low German Advisory Committee/Mennonite Central Committee.

In total, over \$40,000 was given to the organizations and agencies.

As well, the foundation made a major announcement of a new fund – the Annie and Isabelle Chesterfield Fund, which put the foundation over the \$1 million endowment mark.

“All the other community foundations say the first million dollars is the hardest,” SPCCF executive director Elizabeth Hachborn told the Gazette.

The newest fund was created after it was discovered Isabelle Chesterfield – who was raised by her mother, Annie, in St. Marys – had left a \$230,000 trust gift to the city. Chesterfield moved to New York after marrying.

She wanted income from the fund to go to organizations in St. Marys and be named after her mother.

Isabelle’s son Michael Kennedy was at the gala for the announcement.

Hachborn said the Chesterfield fund shows how much more awareness there is about the Community Foundation, considering the gift came from New York.

And raising awareness in the community about what the foundation does and how it operates is important, she said. Events like the Mayor’s Gala have been helping it to raise its profile.

“As more people understand what we do, they see it as something that might fit into their future plans,” Hachborn said. “We’re not like other charities, we don’t have a specific cause, we support the whole charitable sector.

“It’s building endowments and using only the income for granting purposes. Sometimes that’s hard for people to understand.”

Since the foundation was formed in 2004, feedback has been good. Many of its grant recipients are smaller charities who don’t have the time to prepare the lengthy grant applications other funders require.

“It’s been all positive feedback,” Hachborn said.

There’s also been plenty of positive feedback about the Mayor’s Gala, something that will continue to be an annual event. Though initially the plan was to move the event to a different location in the county each year, Hachborn said the gala will now stay put in Stratford.

“We had such positive comments about the event that we didn’t want to move it for that reason,” she said. “We also want to do other events around the county, but there was such good buzz we thought it would be bad luck to move the gala.”

Hachborn said the foundation is looking into hosting other events in other parts of Perth, and hopes to tailor each one to the lifestyle of the area.