

Pastor raises funds to help fight addictions



GUEST SPEAKERS AT A TEEN CHALLENGE CANADA fundraiser for Pastor Veta Saunders of Etobicoke's Praise Centre who was also celebrating her birthday. Below are supporters who showed up to raise funds for a good cause and celebrate Saunders' birthday. **Photos by Christina Murie**

Pastor Vera Saunders, of the Etobicoke Praise Centre, in New Toronto, turned her birthday into a fundraiser to help a group that aid adults kick their addictions. "We cut them a cheque for \$1,000 right away," Saunders said recently of the funds she raised from supporters as they celebrated her turning 73-years-old. "It was a very successful event."

There were notable guest speakers and a sumptuous breakfast at the event to support Teen Challenge Canada.

The 12-month, faith-based, in-residence drug and alcohol rehabilitation program caters to adults who are 18-years and older. It is part of a network of more than 19 Teen Challenge Centres across Canada and more than 1,500 worldwide.

To learn more go to www.teenchallenge.ca



The program offers spiritual, academic and vocational training that helps equip individuals aged 18 and older to return to society as responsible citizens.

Its mission is to help individuals overcome substance addictions to lead full and productive lives.

The program was founded in 1958 by Pastor David Wilkerson who reached out to troubled street youth in New York City. Teen Challenge was created to meet the needs of these youths. Since then the ministry has spread around the world.

Teen Challenge is a non-profit, interdenominational program operating in 82 countries, with over 1,100 locations internationally, and continues to grow at a dramatic pace, officials said.

Some 1125 applications were made to the program in 2021 and 222 as clients stepped through the doors of one its centres nationwide. The session includes 43,639 hours in the classroom and 72,732 hours of work therapy in one year.

Originally located in Hamilton, Ontario, Teen Challenge was established in 1991 in Canada when a nursing home set on 46 acres became available. Teen Challenge purchased the property, converted it to a farm and



CONGREGATION MEMBERS SING happy birthday to Pastor Veta Saunders (with flowers) who used her birthday to raise more than \$1,000 for Teen Challenge Canada.

relocated its residential program to the new site.

About 80.7% of all funds raised go directly to client rehabilitation programming and administrative fees are kept low at 4.6%.

Programming costs include "community engagement," which is on-the-ground, community-focused programming. It includes pre-admission counselling, family support, graduate aftercare, celebrate recovery support groups and other addiction awareness events. Client fees are \$1,100 per person, and make up 2% of the overall cost of the program. The average monthly cost of one program bed is \$4,600.

"With zero funding from provincial and federal governments, Teen Challenge Canada relies solely on the generosity and support of community members and organizations," according to its information.

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