

Local organization comes up a big winner in nationwide, online fundraiser

BY ISAAC OLSON

On Our Own (O3) has hit the jackpot thanks to a charitable foundation's newest fundraising initiative that allows businesses to offer individual donors across Canada an incentive for giving, thus inspiring companies and citizens to work together to donate more.

"We could not have achieved this goal alone," said O3's board president Marilyn Rowell, who noted the non-profit transitional housing organization can stretch "every dollar a really long way" as it helps struggling single parents achieve independence. "It's really a good partnership."

Essentially, explained NDGer Woodrow Rosenbaum, companies offer up a certain prize donation based on the amount or total value of individual donations that come in. In the case of O3, Media Experts offered to donate \$2,000 if individual contributions totalled \$2,000. The end result: 95 people donated over \$3,500 well before the August 15 deadline and, as of press time, the giving continues.

Rosenbaum is the executive director of GIVGroups (found at GIVGroups.ca). GIVGroups is an initiative of the Hallmont Foundation and GIV3 which, through various promotions and initiatives, encourage Canadians to donate at least 3 percent of their income, volunteer three hours per month and tell three of their friends about the importance of giving to charity. GIVGroups uses online



Woodrow Rosenbaum, executive director of GIVGroups, has a coffee with O3's board president, Marilyn Rowell at NDG's Grand Cafe.

Photo: Isaac Olson

resources such as social media to promote the incentive-based campaign.

Donors simply go on the website, click the donate button and send their financial support. The amount is up to the donor. This way, said Rosenbaum, individual donors are inspired because they know every dollar they donate could mean even more if the goal is reached. Companies, he continued, are equally inspired because their contributions go even further.

In this case, which is considered a highly successful first try, over \$5,500 is going into O3's coffers — an amount Rowell said could, for example, support children's programming for nearly half a year. Given the success of the program,

Rosenbaum said the next step of GIVGroups is to find another company willing to offer a jackpot incentive to Canadians for donating to a selected charity. GIVGroups does not charge sponsors, donors nor the recipients anything for the service.

"There was support from across the country," said Rosenbaum, citing the median individual donation as \$20. "We're thrilled with the results."

Jennifer Douglass, a search marketing analyst with the Montreal-based Media Expert office, described O3 as progressive organization that her company has been supporting. Citing the "power in numbers," she said Media Experts staff saw GIVGroups's online-based fundraising platform as an effective means of garnering more donations. It also, she added, allows people of varying income levels to participate as no donation is too big or too small.

"It allowed people to participate at whatever level they could," said Douglass. "It's a really a great channel for small organizations like O3 that don't necessarily have the resources to reach out to as many people."