

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE - JUNE 17, 2002

VAUGHAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE "PAY IT FORWARD" INITIATIVE

Recommendation

The Commissioner of Economic and Technology Development and Corporate Communications, and the Commissioner of Community Services recommend:

That the City of Vaughan endorse the spirit of the Pay It Forward Business-to-Business initiative of the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and

That selected City of Vaughan summer programs be used as a vehicle to inform and incite the youth of our City to ascribe to the altruistic principles represented in the Pay it Forward movement.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Pay it Forward concept was made famous through a book, written by Catherine Hyde Ryan, based on the true story of a young boy whose Social Studies teacher encouraged his class to think of an initiative, as a school project, that would be aimed at making the world a better place. The boy proposed, and implemented within his own circle of family and friends, a concept that essentially dictates that if one individual does something generous and altruistic in spirit, aimed at helping another to overcome a significant challenge, then as "payment" that good Samaritan requests that the recipient of the good deed "pay it forward" to three other people as opposed to "paying the Samaritan back".

This movement has taken hold in the United States, to the extent that a number of communities (i.e. the City of Salem, Oregon) have declared themselves "Pay it Forward Communities".

Several months ago, the then-President of the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Brian Korson (now Immediate Past President) set about formulating how to implement such an initiative within Vaughan's business community. He set up a Task Force to examine the feasibility of such a project and invited the City of Vaughan to participate and, subsequently, the Manager of Business Development was asked to sit on this committee. Over the past five months, the committee has worked to develop the infrastructure that would allow a series of "Ambassadors" to speak to any business citizen of Vaughan who has an interest in participating. A series of collateral materials has been developed (brochures, marketing kits, web presence) to assist in the promotion of the existence of this initiative.

Furthermore, the Task Force has arranged, in cooperation with Warner Brothers and Colossus, to offer a free morning of screenings of the Pay it Forward film, starring Kevin Spacey, Helen Hunt and Haley Joel Osmund as the young boy, to be held at the end of September 2002, as part of a day of activities to raise awareness in our community of this altruistic initiative. The Vaughan Chamber also plans to center the theme of its 25th Anniversary gala around the Pay it Forward effort.

Recommended Action:

After an exploratory meeting between the Vaughan Chamber and Doris Haas, Commissioner of Community Services, it was determined that the Pay it Forward initiative would be an excellent added dimension to selected summer programs in 2002.

The intent is to expose our youth to the merits of altruistic behaviour, to encourage them to think in terms of how their actions can benefit their neighbour and to encourage them in reflection of the ripple effects of their putting someone else's needs before their own.

Camp and program attendees would view the film and perhaps have some discussion of its message afterwards.

Camp counselors and summer staff would view the film in advance and develop an exercise that would allow the children to implement a small-scale version of the Pay it Forward initiative so as to create a pattern of thought that would remain with them even after camp is finished.

Conclusion

The Pay it Forward initiative speaks to the enhancement of the quality of life for all Vaughan residents, not just its business community. The altruistic principles embodied in such an initiative are the cornerstones upon which a vibrant, safe and family-oriented community can build its future.

It is for this reason that staff is recommending that the spirit of the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce Pay it Forward business initiative be embraced by Council, and that staff be directed to include this initiative in its summer programs 2002.

Report prepared by:

Emilia Valentini, Manager, Business Development

Respectfully submitted,

Frank Miele
Commissioner,
Economic and Technology Development and
Corporate Communications

G. Doris Haas
Commissioner, Community Services