

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SEPTEMBER 2, 2008

CHARACTER COMMUNITY INITIATIVE - 2008

Recommendation

The Character Community Committee, in consultation with the Senior Management Team, recommends:

1. That Character Community Week be celebrated annually in conjunction with York Region's Character Community Week with various initiatives expected to be held October 27 – 31, 2008;
2. The adoption of the eleven (11) York Region Character Community attributes, and that "leadership" be the twelfth attribute of the City of Vaughan;
3. That the City continue to liaise with Boards of Education's Community Coordinators with respect to engaging the City and the schools through various Character Community initiatives such as school presentations and City Councillor visitations;
4. That a communications and marketing plan be developed to include, but not be limited or restricted to: website content, chat rooms, corporate letterhead, banners, community meetings, Council meetings, Recreation Guide, Vibe, signage, logos, school flyers etc.;
5. That the Director of Recreation and Culture, or designate, continue to be on the Character Community Coalition, which is a sub-committee of York Region's Character Community committee;
6. That a subcommittee of volunteers (i.e. community members, students) be established to liaise with the Vaughan Character Community Committee to support the initiatives set out annually for Character Community Week;
7. That the Civic Hero Award capture the Character Community attributes;
8. That under the leadership of the Human Resources Department, an internal committee be struck to determine how the Corporation will celebrate the twelve (12) attributes throughout the year with various initiatives i.e. the Employee Recognition Program.

Economic Impact

The number and extent of the programs and initiatives that will be implemented will determine the budget impact. Any such funding requirements will be submitted during the 2009 budget process. The ongoing budget requirements for the initiatives will be submitted in the 2009 budget process.

Communications Plan

A communications plan will be developed to create awareness about Character Community week and will include, but not be limited to, the preparation of a news release, information in various City publications, the City's website and advertisements in local newspapers, and flyer/newsletter distribution in schools.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to report on past achievements, establish an ongoing commitment to Character Community, and to propose initiatives to support the Character Community initiative.

Background - Analysis and Options

A Character Community is one in which elected officials, community leaders, citizens and staff recognize and promote good character. Everyone works together to ensure that families are strong, homes and streets are safe, education is effective, business is productive, neighbours care about one another, and people make wise choices for their families and lives. In short, a Character Community has leaders who are models of the character attributes they advocate for their citizens.

The concept of Character Communities first started in inner City schools in the U.S. From there it came up to Canada through the schools and various municipalities. The Character Community initiative first became active in York Region in 2002 when the Region declared itself to be a Character Community. Vaughan City Council, at its meeting on October 9, 2007, established a Character Community Working Committee with representation from Council (Mayor Linda Jackson, Regional Councillor Frustaglio, and Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco). The City of Vaughan is proud of its participation as a Character Community as well as being a member on the Character Community Council.

The Boards of Education have also adopted the Character Community initiatives and celebrate the attributes in a variety of ways within the schools.

Character Community champions eleven (11) attributes chosen by the public: respect, responsibility, courage, inclusivity, honesty, fairness, integrity, optimism, compassion, perseverance and initiative. To round out the number to twelve (12), the Character Community Working Committee recommends that "leadership" be added as the twelfth (12th) attribute allowing the City of Vaughan to highlight one attribute each month. See the "I Live with Character" brochure attached.

The Region of York has typically celebrated Character Community week during the month of October. In 2007, the City of Vaughan initiated Character Community and scheduled various activities to draw attention to and highlight the programme. Activities included:

- Visits by the Mayor and Members of Council to schools to promote Character Community
- Motivational speakers
- Presentations by schools with respect to their initiatives as they related to Character Community
- Adjusting the Mayor's Award at the Chamber of Commerce which incorporated consideration of the business' actions as it related to the Character Community attributes
- VBEC provided sessions on Selling with Ethics
- Media Releases and Advisory's were prepared and released during the week
- Banners, pamphlets and stickers promoted Character Community Week at the Civic Centre

Promoting the programme is critical to educating the Community about Character Communities. A robust communications and marketing plan, including, but not limited to website content, promotional material, use of the Recreation Guide, Vibe, signage, logos, school flyers, use of marquees, announcements at Council meetings, including a Character Community attribute on meeting agenda, etc. These methods can be used to further establish the Character Community

attributes the way we want them to be celebrated during Character Community week. Attached is a copy of an example of information promoting the attributes to residents of the City of Vaughan.

To assist with the further integration of this initiative into the mainstream of Vaughan's communities, a sub-committee of volunteers should be established to liaise with the Vaughan Character Community Working Committee and to assist and support the implementation of the initiatives that are established for Character Community Week.

Further, it must be recognized that to achieve greater success, the initiative must be embraced by the staff of the Corporation to endorse and promote the development of positive attributes. Under the leadership of the Human Resources Department, an internal committee will be struck to determine how the Corporation will celebrate the twelve (12) attributes throughout the year. Work will be undertaken to capture the character attributes through both the Civic Hero Award and the Employee Recognition Program while continuing to look for new initiatives that will help the City and community celebrate Character Community week.

In conclusion, a Character Community has leaders who are models of the character attributes they advocate for their citizens. The initiatives outlined above will help further develop this worthy goal.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020

All initiatives of Vaughan Vision 2020 are included with the adoption and continuation of the Character Community program including Service Excellence by preserving our heritage and supporting diversity, arts and culture, Management Excellence by demonstrating leadership and promoting effective governance, and Staff Excellence by valuing and encouraging a highly motivated workforce..

Regional Implications

The City will continue to work with the Character Community Committee of York Region as well as staff will continue to be involved with the Character Community Coalition.

Conclusion

Council at its meeting on October 9, 2007 approved Character Communities Week and that the City of Vaughan continue to develop public education and awareness initiatives in 2008 to support the Character Community programme. A working committee with representation from Council and staff has prepared a number of initiatives for the year, including Character Community Week, to foster the importance of Vaughan as a Character Community.

Attachments

1. "I Live With Character" Poster

Report Prepared By

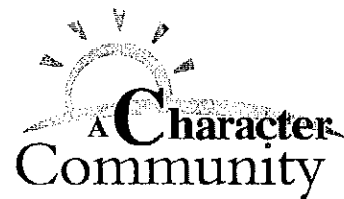
Monika Pii Smith, Area Recreation Manager

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor Linda Jackson

Regional Councillor Joyce Frustaglio

Councillor Sandra Yeung Racco



I LIVE WITH CHARACTER

**Respect ★ Responsibility ★ Honesty ★ Integrity
Compassion ★ Courage ★ Inclusiveness ★ Fairness
Optimism ★ Perseverance ★ Initiative ★ Leadership**

RESPECT

I will treat myself and others with consideration, high regard and dignity.

RESPONSIBILITY

I will be accountable for my actions, be reliable and keep my commitments.

HONESTY

I will be sincere, trustworthy and truthful.

INTEGRITY

I will do what is right and ensure there is no difference between what I say and what I do.

COMPASSION

I will do whatever is necessary to heal the hurts of others. I will strive to understand and be sensitive to their feelings.

COURAGE

I will stand up for my beliefs and principles and face challenges, fear and difficulty with fortitude.

INCLUSIVENESS

I will work to build a community where everyone feels included, empowered and valued for his or her unique contributions.

FAIRNESS

I will treat others in a just, equitable and unbiased manner.

OPTIMISM

I will maintain a positive attitude, look on the brighter side of situations and seek opportunities in the face of adversity.

PERSEVERANCE

I will not give up when things get tough. I will stick to my goals and work hard to achieve them, despite obstacles and challenges.

INITIATIVE

I will recognize what needs to be done and do it, without prompting from others.

LEADERSHIP

I will provide charismatic inspiration to motivate others.

For further information and translations of these attributes, visit
www.charactercommunity.com

The Character Community initiative is recognized and supported by
The City of Vaughan.