

United Way of Oakville recognizes GenNext

by John Bkila

Oakville Beaver Staff

It's not much of a surprise that when people become more engaged in their neighbourhoods, the community at large benefits — it's even better when younger generations get more involved.

That's what GenNext strives to do. A separate entity, it works alongside United Way branches to create opportunities for young professionals to support the non-profit organization, its funded agencies and become pillars in their community.

Geoff Gibson, GenNext Oakville co-chair, along with Fraser Damoff, decided to bring the GenNext model to the United Way of Oakville (UWO) after seeing its success in Kingston, Ont., where he lived.

Having grown up in Oakville, Gibson moved back to town in October 2012.

"I had been a supporter of the United Way for many years, so I knew when I moved back I would remain involved with the United Way in some capacity," he said.

As an assistant product manager for Empire Life Investments in Toronto, Gibson led its United Way workplace campaign for two years. He was then asked by the organization's Kingston branch if he would be interested in establishing a GenNext committee locally — the model had already been estab-



United Way of Oakville's (UWO) GenNext committee presented its Top 20 Under 40 Volunteer Awards recently at Compass Restaurant. Among the winners were, in front, from left, Julia Mogus, Emma Mogus, Carolina Pericao, Jennifer Malabar and Alexander Silver, and in back, from left, Tyler Shane, Sydney Clark, Dave Millar and James Montague. | photo by James Hoggett - special to the Beaver

lished in many larger cities, such as Toronto, Ottawa, and London, Ont.

"(UWO) has a strong relationship with the United Way in Kingston, so (its) CEO

passed along the news that I was returning to Oakville. After meeting with the (UWO), we decided that Oakville would be a great place to launch a similar initia-

tive," said Gibson.

"Our goals were similar to Kingston's in that we wanted to help ensure that the United Way's message continues to resonate with the GenNext demographic and to ensure that we build a pipeline of GenNext volunteers, supporters, and leaders for the United Way and the community at large."

GenNext Oakville decided the first step in making that happen would be to host its inaugural Top 20 Under 40 Awards event, which highlighted the work being done by local volunteers.

Made up of eight community volunteers and one UWO member, the GenNext Oakville committee used the awards night, held Thursday, April 10, as its official launch — although it has been meeting once a month since August 2013.

More than 150 people attended the event, held at Compass Restaurant in Oakville.

The evening was emceed by Shane Cullis, of Intelligent Office and member of the Oakville Chamber of Commerce. It saw Minister of Labour and Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn present the 20 recipients with their awards.

"This event recognized the contributions from the next generation of leaders in Oakville," said Flynn.

"I was very proud of all these inspiring,

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