

COMMUNITY SERVICE: *Businessman takes on volunteer task to lead region's UW campaign*

Leading the way

BY MIKE ADLER
Staff Writer

York Region is a place where employers want to move, and where people want to live.

But to keep the region healthy, Mike Egan says, more companies and more employees have to get behind the United Way.

"If we don't treat the community as a whole, then that's all jeopardized," the president of Markham's InSystems Technologies said last week.

The United Way of York Region gets about 87 per cent of its support direct from corporations or their employees.

This year's fundraising campaign chairperson for the organization, Egan, 49, aims to get more companies involved.

The United Way made Egan, whose software firm helps financial companies manage documents, its third campaign chairperson in three years from the region's fast-expanding high-tech sector.

The volunteer post, leading 1,000 helpers, was ably held last year by Nigel Stokes, president of the Markham-based DataMirror Corporation, and in 1997 by Mark Durst, president of Patriot Computers in Thornhill.

Egan, a Newmarket resident, headed the 1998 campaign among technology firms and saw them double their contributions.

"The giving within the technology division has skyrocketed," Wyn Chivers, the United Way's executive director, said this week.

This year, although the official kickoff isn't until September, Egan wanted to start the campaign early and strong.

"We got a very early start and think we're going to have a really good year," he said.

Government cutbacks to social programs for children, seniors, and families in need make support for the United Way more essential, Egan added.

"You probably know one or two people that are benefiting directly from



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Mike Egan, president of InSystems Technologies has been named chairperson of the York Region United Way fundraising campaign, leading 1,000 volunteers.

United Way programs.

The charity umbrella has started a strong effort, called "Youth on Board" to recruit younger volunteers. Last month, the United Way nominated Laura Tsang, 19, of Unionville as a board member, and said 17 of its 39 member agencies have also opened a position for a youth representative.

"They know it's a great organization,

but don't know how to access it," said Tsang, a recent Markham District High School graduate.

Carolyn Smith, coordinator of Youth on Board, said a similar program in the Windsor area proved people who became involved in a voluntary activity in their youth were still involved a decade later.

POLICE

Man presumed drowned in Lake Simcoe

BY LISA QUEEN
Staff Writer

A Toronto man is presumed drowned after he jumped into Lake Simcoe Sunday to retrieve his hat.

Yesterday, police divers and the marine unit continued to search for Dave Ledrew, 42.

The Etobicoke man was sailing with three friends on Cook's Bay at about 5 p.m. Sunday. He jumped overboard to recover his hat. He was last seen swimming away from the boat, York Regional Police Staff Sgt. Al Ledger said.

The friends turned the boat around and searched for Ledrew, but couldn't find him.

Ledrew, who didn't know if the man was wearing a life jacket, said he was at least two kilometres off shore at Orchard Beach when he jumped into the water.

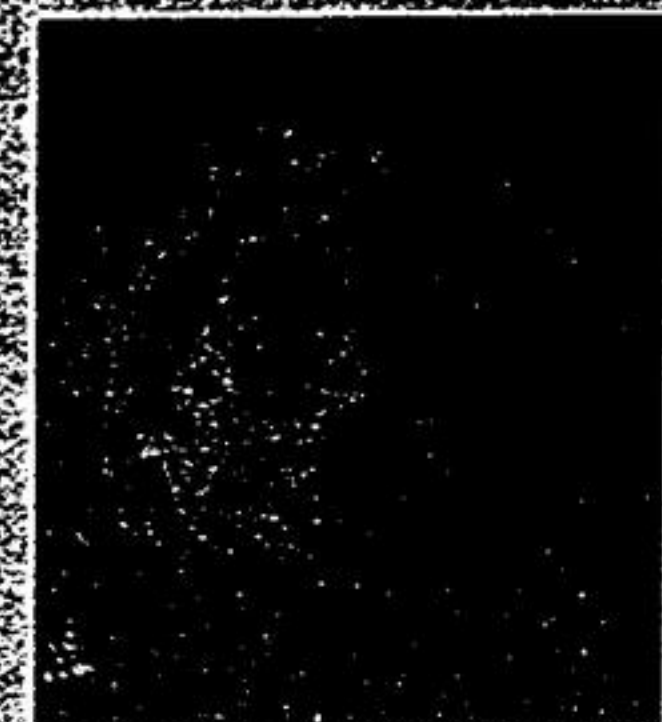
York police used their marine boats to hunt for Ledrew, while an OPP helicopter searched for him by air, but they failed to find him. Police list him as missing and presumed drowned.

Ironically, as police searched for Ledrew, two Georgina residents rescued

a family whose canoe overturned in the same area yesterday afternoon.

A group of Lake Drive residents, who were just heading out the door for a shopping trip, heard cries for help coming from the water. Sharon Hagle pulled out her binoculars and saw two parents and their daughters clinging to the canoe about 200 yards from shore, screaming for help.

"We're all on our toes because of the drowning yesterday," said Hagle, adding both parents and their daughters were wearing lifejackets.



Joan Ransberry

Who is responsible for wells running dry?

Something's wrong. Within hours of each other, the wells at half a dozen homes on Marjorie Drive in Vandorf went dry.

Recognizing a problem, York Region launched an investigation to find out why.

As an emergency measure, regional staff delivered 10 water tanks to each affected home. The tanks weigh 1,200 gallons each. They're big and ugly, but if you can't brush your teeth, they're precious.

The people living in this upscale neighbourhood are taking the situation in stride. Instead of screaming blue murder, the residents are bending over backwards to show they're tolerant, fair and understanding residents.

Still, I suspect the homeowners feel slightly shafted. After all, they paid the earth for their homes.

At the time of sale, I expect purchasers were told the water supply to operate their dream home was endless. And, maybe no one had any reason to believe otherwise.

Like his neighbours, Bill Puskar and his family aren't going off the deep end. When the family heard the neighbour's well went dry two weeks ago, the Puskar family began to ration. It was pointless. Despite efforts to conserve water, their well went bone dry. The Puskar's are now making do with the tank water and are collecting rain water to nourish their tomato plants.

Homeowner Ivanka Bradley said everyone is depending on cooperation from York Region. "I can take a shower, wash my clothes and brush my teeth now. That's progress," she said.

Nobody, including the Vandorf Ratepayers' Association, is pointing the finger of blame at York Region. Bob McNeely, VRA executive member, is emphatic: York Region has been more than cooperative.

The VRA has put together an information flyer, outlining the water problem and the course of action to be distributed to Vandorf residents in a few days.

Vandorf's water source comes from two aquifers. The affected aquifer is 170 feet deep. About 70 homes are connected to it. Of course, more than 60 homeowners are now wondering if this spells trouble for them, too.

The option of connecting Vandorf to the Big Pipe must be gaining popularity.

Usually, when a hamlet is connected to a communal water system, there's lots of kicking and screaming. It's a different story when wells go dry.

Since the Ministry of the Environment provides the permits to pump the water in Vandorf, the province carries responsibility.

Whitchurch-Stouffville is also keeping a close eye on things. Mayor Wayne Emmerson said some people link the problem to a below-normal amount of snowfall this past winter followed by almost draught conditions.

I don't buy this explanation. Neither snow nor draught caused this. There's a possibility that nearby golf courses are taxing the aquifer to fulfill their irrigation needs.

Still, I don't think the golf courses are alone in this. My gut tells me that one local industry is the main culprit. Ward 1 councillor Steve Pliakes is dead on when he said: "Someone has over-used."

Now, all we need to know is: Who?

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