

Awards celebrate people with character

BY TERESA LATCHFORD
Staff Reporter

Here's your chance to introduce the characters in your life to your community.

The deadline for nominations for the third annual York Region Character Community Awards is quickly approaching, through which York Region residents have the opportunity to recognize the good character practices of their families, co-workers, friends and neighbours.

The awards let everyday individuals and groups, striving to make a difference through the demonstration and promotion of good character, know their efforts are appreciated, council member Ken Turriff said.

"Good character in all facets of life helps ensure this is a safe and vibrant place," he said. "I am proud to live and work in a community that embraces these qualities."

Last year's award ceremony at the Markham Theatre uncovered a host of inspirational stories and the more stories that are shared, the more inspired the community becomes, Mr. Turriff said, adding good character is hard to ignore and rubs off on the community.

Marty Deveny of Stouffville received the Wendel Clark award for pursuing victory with honour last year.

A story that caught the attention of many last year was that of Markham resident Mary Brown, who was honoured with the sustainable futures character award for a simple, but considerate act she has repeated for more than eight years.

While walking her dog, Tabitha, she noticed the greenspace behind the local library was messy. She made a note to bring a bag on the next walk and picked up litter everyday after that.

"I just like my street to be clean," she said at last year's ceremony. "Now, it has become kind of an obsession. It's my effort

Character counts

Here are some quality character traits worth celebrating:

- ▶ Optimism
- ▶ Initiative
- ▶ Perseverance
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Responsibility
- ▶ Honesty
- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Compassion
- ▶ Courage
- ▶ Inclusiveness
- ▶ Fairness

for my community."

Simple acts of character are important to the community and need to be recognized.

This year, the categories include business of character, business leader, citizen of courage, character advocate, citizen of character, neighbourhood of character, school of character, educator of character, Wendel Clark sports award, pursuing character through the arts, character hero, health care worker of character, customer service of character and change our world.

Marty Deveny of Stouffville received the Wendel Clark award for pursuing victory with honour last year.

He was recognized for starting and coaching a Special Olympics basketball team.

Mr. Deveny, 47, has also coached rep hockey and football in Stouffville and Markham.

Each nomination will be judged according to the number of attributes identified, how many people have been impacted by their actions in the community, leadership in character development and community participation.

All nominees will be invited to the awards celebration at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts at 10268 Yonge St. in Richmond Hill from 7 to 9 p.m. April 28.

Nominations must be submitted by 4:30 p.m. Feb. 6.

More information and nomination forms can be found at www.charactercommunity.com

Toronto slow go on GTA transit card

The new regional transit fare card may work like magic, but only if Toronto comes on board.

Presto, as the card is called, will be rolling out through the GTA's transit systems, becoming standard in York Region in 2010.

Users will be able to load it up like a debit card, swiping it when boarding various transit systems.

Markham Regional Councillor Jack Heath questioned why the City of Toronto has been slow to get on board the program, so far agreeing only to monitor its progress.

"Officially, the TTC is not yet part of this project," said York Region Transit manager Don Gordon.

"Until it's working in Toronto, it can't work across the GTA," said regional chairperson Bill Fisch, who also sits on the Metrolinx board.

He said once the card is available, Toronto residents will demand it, forcing the TTC's hand.

While a regional fare structure has not been worked out, Mr. Gordon said the card is designed to accommodate fare-by-distance systems.

As employed by systems such as London's underground, users swipe cards when they enter and again when they leave, at which point a fare is assessed.

GO's trains will be the first local system to employ the card.

The provincial government has said it will withhold gas tax funds for any transit system that does not participate.

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