

Award winners embrace right stuff

BY CHRIS TRABER
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Character isn't merely a word, Richmond Hill retiree Mel Thompson, contests. It's action and a meld of attributes that guide behaviour for the betterment of communities.

Grade 12 Aurora High School student Brooke Harrison agrees.

"Character attributes aren't just a list on paper. Once you put them into action, you see how a community becomes a better, brighter place," said this year's recipient of the Character Community Foundation of York Region's Change our World Community award.

Ms Harrison, 17 and Mr. Thompson, recipient of the foundation's citizens of character adult category award, are emblematic of the foundation's practices and elegant philosophy: When people and communities embrace living with character, we can change the world we live in for the better.

With character community week starting Monday, the foundation is launching a variety of regionwide activities to bring character attributes to light and life, executive director Karen Addison said. Featured are speaking engagements by award winners who employ and embody character attributes.

MENTAL ILLNESS STIGMA

A longtime Xerox Canada senior executive, Mr. Thompson is now president of the Awareness Works Foundation, formed in 2009 for the purpose of raising mental health awareness and eliminating mental illness stigma.

The first major initiative undertaken by Mr. Thompson and his family was the Ride for Mental Health, a 100-day bicycle trek across Canada.

The Thompsons stopped in cities along the way to take part in mental health rallies. Their journey raised awareness and more than \$225,000. In addition, the family volunteers its time at Treasures Thrift Store, which offers a place of work and support for people living with mental and emotional problems.

He was surprised to be nominated, let alone selected for the prestigious award, he said.

"The character attributes are common sense and something I live with and I long realized they are critical to having communities and a country that's great," he said.

Mr. Thompson will address students from both school boards Wednesday at a York Region-

al Police character youth engagement panel at the Richmond Hill Rouge Woods Community Centre.

"The earlier we can introduce attribute terms and turn teens into role models, the better," he said.

Ms Harrison will share her character vision Monday at the YMCA young leaders council in Newmarket.

At 13, she was co-founder of the Philip Aziz Centre, a home hospice service for youths with life-limiting illnesses.

She was named outstanding youth phi-

'Everyone has goodness inside them. We just need the opportunity to make a difference in this world.'

Brooke Harrison
Character Community Award winner

lanthropist last year by the Association of Fundraising Professionals for her part in raising more than \$110,000 over four years. The centre is now in the midst of building Emily's House, a palliative care facility in Toronto.

The young woman, who plans to study social justice at university next year, attributes her character development to her mother and father.

"I have amazing parents who raised us to be very respectful," she said. "I think everyone has the ability to use all the character attributes. Everyone has goodness inside them. We just need the opportunity to make a difference in this world."

Character week can be a life changer, she said.

"It'll be an amazing opportunity for people of all ages to tap into the attributes hiding inside," Ms Harrison said.

The week also celebrates the 10th anniversary of York Region as a character community, Ms Addison said.

The concept was initially conceived at an international Quest for Character Symposium hosted in April, 2001, by the York Region District School Board. At that event, then Markham Mayor Don Cousens took on the challenge to host a forum about building cities of character. In June, York Regional Council approved

the establishment of a Steering Committee to develop a proposal for a Character Community in York Region. Enthusiastic support from a wide spectrum of members of area municipalities, businesses, educators, community organizations and residents convinced the steering committee that a region-wide character community initiative would be welcomed in the Region.

In 2002, council approved a resolution declaring York Region a Character Community, the first regional municipality to do so in Canada. A logo, mission and vision statement, and a website were introduced. Within a few months, the 11 attributes were chosen and retired NHL hockey player Wendel Clark was selected to be the first character champion.

The mandate of the foundation is to promote positive character development throughout York Region in families, neighbourhoods, school boards, businesses and local government. The goal is to raise awareness and educate the public, private and non-profit sectors on character development.

New this year is the live with character challenge, a way for residents to showcase how they or their community uses character or celebrates attributes where they live, learn and play. The deadline for submissions is Nov. 7.

CHARACTER CHALLENGE

You can submit short videos, create a public service announcement related to an attribute, send photos, a slideshow, artwork, poem or song with the character story they tell.

The benefits reach beyond the exercise, Ms Addison said. Each submission receives a certificate of appreciation and a selection of entries will be showcased on the foundation website, at public events and at the 2012 character awards in April at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts.

Character community week serves up an array of activities with regional partners, including food bank donations, a veterans and military respect and remembrance tea at the Aurora Legion, a United Way fundraising euchre tournament at York Region's administrative centre in Newmarket, a Safety Village Halloween day in Stouffville and a food drive at Markham Bowl.

"It's a great time to focus on attributes and the importance of living with character in our communities," Ms Addison said.

ON THE WEB

► For details on how you can support the foundation, print an online character community week guide and get information on multimedia submissions, visit charactercommunity.com

CORRECTION NOTICE

Please note that incorrect dates were printed on the St. James Presbyterian Church ad in the Thursday, October 20th Stouffville Sun-Tribune. The Legion Ladies Bazaar is SATURDAY, October 22nd And the St. James Bazaar is SATURDAY, October 29th

We apologize for any inconvenience This may have caused

FLYERS

Inserts for Sat., Oct. 15, 2011

- WATER DEPOT*
- MINDTECH
- MONTESSORI*
- CENTURY 21- SOUTH BREEZE*
- HOME HARDWARE*
- VANAİK FURNITURE*
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A message from The War Amps
"Safety is no accident, so PLAYSAFE!"

For more information, call: 1-800-250-3030

This message brought to you as a community service of The Stouffville Sun Tribune

LEARNING DISABILITIES?

If you or your child suffers from **LEARNING DISABILITIES** then attending this free symposium may be the most important thing you do this year. You will discover the true cause of these conditions and natural solutions and options you can use right away to overcome them. Many children and adults with ADD and Dyslexia have seen significant improvement without medication. Dr. Turner is an international speaker and lecturer who has been featured on the *Dini Petty Show, National News, Canada AM, CFTO News, Marilyn Denis CITYLINE and Riley Live*. He will present a free symposium on Thursday, October 27th at 7:30 pm at the Stouffville Health Centre, 6219 Main Street, Stouffville, L4A 8A4.

To register call 905-640-4440 or email seminar_registration@rogers.com (include # of seats & contact info)

WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE SOCCER CLUB

STOUFFVILLE MUSTANGS COMPETITIVE REP TEAM

TRY-OUTS 2012 OUTDOOR SEASON

AGE (BIRTH YEAR)	LOCATION	TRYOUT DATES	DAY	TIME
U12 Girls (2000)	Stouffville High School gym	October 23, 2011	Sunday	3:00-5:00 pm
U13 Girls (1999)	Stouffville High School gym	October 23, 2011 &	Sunday	5:00-6:00 pm
		October 30, 2011	Sunday	4:00-5:00 pm

** U14 Girls (1998) and U15 Girls (1997) to hold tryouts later in winter. Check www.wssc.info for updates.

Parents & Players please note

Try-out Registration forms will be available on the days above and must be completed prior to the player taking part

There is a \$5 tryout fee per player per session payable at the door upon entry

Please bring shin guards and indoor running shoes

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