

Comparative Cultures

The Joy Of Giving Back



By Kinjal Dagli Shah

There are so many ways of contributing to the world and its people but the most gratifying form of giving is perhaps when you give of your time and talent. As children, our parents often encouraged my brother and me to give in kind rather than cash.

I remember a time as an undergraduate, when I volunteered to write high school exam papers for visually impaired students. Three of us got together to become writers for three students senior to us. We could only write for students that were academically senior so that they wouldn't have an unfair advantage lest we used our own knowledge in the exam. We would write what they dictated to us. All three of them passed

the Grade 12 exam with a first class or higher, and they were understandably ecstatic. Even if we only wrote what they knew and could verbalize, they gave us enormous credit for passing, and took us out to lunch. It was a most enjoyable lunch date.

Through the rest of my undergraduate years, I had the opportunity to visit old-age homes, teach street children and help plan picnics for them, and paint posters for exhibitions that highlighted social issues.

I was lucky to be part of an educational institution that valued social work and community welfare. It taught me things beyond the grades and degrees I stayed up nights to earn; it fed my soul rather than my resume. I have often enjoyed using my writing skills to help cousins,

friends and colleagues with their statements of purpose, debates and, ironically, resumes. It always makes me happy to know that they think of me as someone able and willing to help them! I have often received help from those more experienced and skilled than me, and willingly at that. Perhaps that's why I feel it is my duty to pay it forward.

I recently received a request to write and edit a newsletter for a new temple in Brampton. I agreed to do the job. It was barely one page long and took me under an hour to finish. I received profuse thanks and gratitude in return, especially from an elderly gentleman who was instrumental in ensuring the temple was built. So grateful and self-effacing was this person, who is at the helm of a successful development and management company, that I could hardly believe my ears. But then, I later learnt, he has also been the recipient of a Humanitarian of the Year award. It's usually the people that have achieved a lot who are also the most humble.

I believe that everything that comes your way has a reason and a purpose. I am not exceedingly devout but have often found resonance with spirituality. Maybe this is my place as a cog in the wheel of the world.

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National Youth Week 2015



Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum will host a Dove Self-Esteem workshop on May 9 as part of this year's Youth Week activities.

By Sarah Newton

You may have seen the banner on Main Street announcing National Youth Week in Whitchurch-Stouffville from May 1 to 7.

The ninth annual Stouffville Has Talent competition will headline this year's program. "Stouffville Has Talent has been a very popular way for citizens to get engaged in Youth Week," said organizer Hayley Johnson, recreational programming assistant for the town. "The event is being held at Nineteen on the Park and there is always a good turn out."

The 2015 roster has broadened to include half-price skates and swims, skate and film competitions, the You Are Enough seminar and some new events hosted by the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum and Latcham Gallery, said Hayley.

"This year, there will be something for everyone."

She created events from feedback received from previous years and by consulting with the Whitchurch-Stouffville Youth Council, which was established more than a decade ago by town recreation programmer Jen McEachen to "empower and encourage youth to become active within the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville."

With the population increasing, Jen felt there was a need to "engage youth to get involved in issues and events that are important to them," so she established the council specifically for 13-18 year olds. It now has more than 25 members.

Both Hayley and Jen believe Youth Week offers opportunities for young

people to gain civic exposure by volunteering.

"Youth can also try new services such as the pool and new skate park, giving participants a good overview of what's available to experience in town in one week," said Hayley.

Organizers are excited about new partnerships with the museum and Latcham Gallery. The museum will host the Dove Self-Esteem workshop for girls and female mentors on May 9 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., while Latcham Gallery will host Paint Battle 2015, a live art challenge, on May 7 at 7 p.m.

Youth Week was established in 2006 by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association and is designed to encourage communities to host events that support the principles of international youth development.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Youth Council is active throughout the school year, organizing events such as the Halloween Haunted House. Members also hope to "attend some town council meetings to provide information for the council and public about what the Youth Council is achieving," said Jen, adding that members attended a town council meeting in April to promote Youth Week events.

By becoming involved, she said, teenagers will learn advocacy and leadership skills and how to create positive social change and inclusiveness, while gaining job experience and learning to value a positive sense of community.

For full details on Youth Week and the Youth Council, call the Whitchurch-Stouffville Leisure Centre at 905-642-PLAY (7529) or visit www.townofws.ca.

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