

# Character Community



## E-News



*A Town of Richmond Hill initiative.*

*A Town of Richmond Hill Character Community monthly e-letter*

## February is Initiative

*I will recognize what needs to be done and do it, without prompting from others.*

February 2007

### Town of Richmond Hill Character Community Organizations

Arts Richmond Hill Inc.  
The Curtain Club  
Girl Guides of Canada York South Division  
Helpmate Community Information  
Hill House Hospice  
Ja'fari Islamic Housing  
Learning Disabilities Association of York Region  
Lions Club of Richmond Hill  
Music For Young Children  
Music to Care for Your Life  
My Canada! Integration Settlement Services  
Optimist Club of Richmond Hill  
Richmond Hill Aquatic Club  
Richmond Hill Canoe Club  
Richmond Hill Chamber of Commerce  
Richmond Hill Community Food Bank  
Richmond Hill Rams Hockey Club  
Richmond Hill Social & Bocce Club  
Richmond Hill Training Centre  
Richmond Hill Winter Carnival  
Royal Canadian Legion Branch #375  
Spiritual Assembly of the Bahai's of Richmond Hill  
St. Matthew's United Church Health Cabinet  
Stroke Recovery Network  
The Amici Centre  
Wilderness Lifeskills of Youth Inc.



## Thinking Outside the Box



Innovation is the spark that keeps organizations moving ever onward and upward. We innovate to

- (1) improve products and services,
- (2) find a new way to do something,
- (3) make a task easier or faster,
- (4) save money,
- (5) enhance our jobs, and
- (6) increase our promotability.

Without innovation, new products, new services and new ways of doing business would never emerge, and most organizations would be forever stuck doing the same old things the same old way.

It has been said that 98 percent of an organization's problems can be solved routinely.

However, the remaining 2 percent of an organization's problems coincidentally, the problems that have the greatest effect on the organization-require employee innovation to surmount.

Despite the undeniably positive benefits of innovation within organizations, it seems that roadblocks to thinking creatively abound.

According to a UCLA study, at age five, we engage in creative tasks 98 times a day, laugh 113 times, and ask questions 65 times. By the age of 44, however, the numbers shrink to 2 creative tasks a day, 11 laughs and 6 questions. Furthermore, the UCLA study found a 91 percent negative response rate among adults exposed to new ideas.

Creativity and innovation flourish in an



Photo: <http://www.dpchallenge.com>

environment that encourages them to grow and to blossom, but all it takes is a frown or a negative word to shut them down completely.

Source: <http://www.itstime.com>



## Character Events

### Character Community Information Session – Friday, February 23

Come and learn more about the Character Community program and how to implement it in your local municipality. Register early as space is limited. Cost is \$40 payable to Character Foundation of York Region. Reserve your spot by contacting Christine deHaas at (905) 830-4444, ext. 1522 or [character.community@york.ca](mailto:character.community@york.ca)

### The First Annual Character Community Awards

Do you know someone who as demonstrated positive character attributes in their home, school, work or community? Why not nominate them for a Character Community Award? Deadline for submissions is February 28, 2007. For more information go to: <http://www.charactercommunity.com/c-c-awards.htm>

## Facing Challenges / Taking Initiative

Michael S. Brockman, University of California, Davis  
Stephen T. Russell, Ph.D., University of Arizona

What does facing challenges / taking initiative mean? Some young people choose to participate in diverse and challenging activities, remain motivated in the face of obstacles, and persist until they accomplish their goals. These youth are said to have initiative. Initiative is the motivation to direct effort toward achieving challenging goals and remain determined even when things get difficult (Larson, 2000). Developing this initiative requires



Photo: <http://www.cyfm.net>

three key things: intrinsic motivation; deliberate, goal-directed action in real-world situations and sustaining goal-directed efforts over time (Larson, 2000). What this means is that young people with initiative:

- Are personally invested in their activities;
- Exert attention, effort, and concentration in complex and challenging real-world situations; and
- Continue working to achieve their goals, even if it involves re-evaluating and adjusting their strategies in the face of setbacks (Larson, 2000).

### How to help young people face challenges and take initiative in the community:

- Create projects, programs, and organizations that (1) are youth-based and motivate young people to determine the direction and goals of the activities, (2) engage young people in environments that include real-world challenges that are well-matched to their abilities, and (3) involve activities that are continued over time and require young people to monitor, regulate, and plan for the course ahead (Larson, 2000);
- De-emphasize competition and social comparison, and convey to youth that abilities consist of skills that they can acquire and develop (Bandura, 1993);
- Encourage young people to evaluate their performances according to objective criteria rather than the judgments of others (Butler, 2002);
- Provide concrete, process-oriented feedback instead of simply saying "good job" or "try harder" (Schunk, 1994);
- Give young people choices about what activities to engage in, how to accomplish their projects, and with whom they want to work (Zimmerman, 2002);
- Help young people generate new strategies when they do not achieve what they intend to achieve (Butler, 2002);
- Teach young people how to set specific, challenging short-term goals, rather than vague long-term goals (Gollwitzer, 1999; Pajares, 2002; Schunk, 1994); and
- Readily admit your own mistakes so that young people come to understand that mistakes are an unavoidable part of life and may be surmounted (Pajares, 2002).

Source: <http://cals-cf.calsnet.arizona.edu>

**Next Month's Attribute:**  
March is Perseverance

## Recognize Where Initiative Is Required

How well do you understand the needs of your company and your boss? Can you outline what is important to them?

Initiative is about taking steps to make your company better, not about wasting time tackling unimportant matters. To make the



distinction, try determining the impact a certain action would make on team performance, the company's bottom line or the company's long-term prosperity.

If the answer is "a lot," ask yourself why the company has not already dedicated resources to the problem. In exploring the issue, you will probably come across a number of reasons -- some good, some not -- as to why no action has been taken already. Some common reasons are:

### There is not enough time or resources

*If this is the case, be prepared to work harder and find like-minded individuals so you won't compromise the resources that are currently available to your boss.*

### The magnitude of the problem has not been realized

*Are you correct in your analysis of the issue? Be ready to challenge your own beliefs.*

### A viable solution or course of action was not apparent

*Are you in a situation to offer a different perspective on how to tackle the issue?*

Initiative takes a lot of effort, cooperation and patience. However, when you take measures to help your boss or colleagues, such actions are always valued for their sincerity. There are benefits to your initiative, but they should not be the driving force for your actions. Initiative opens opportunities for you to take charge, work with new people and possibly develop new skills. It may also help you score well on that year-end review.

Source:

[http://ca.askmen.com/money/professional\\_100/137\\_professional\\_life.html](http://ca.askmen.com/money/professional_100/137_professional_life.html)



Suzuki Canada showed initiative recently by presenting the Town of Richmond Hill's Fire Department with two Suzuki XL-7 sport utility vehicles. The generous donation will help spread fire and life safety messages.

*Character Community E-News is a monthly e-mail newsletter to share information about upcoming events within our organization and beyond. If you would like to contribute upcoming Character Community event information, story ideas or photos, please forward it to the Editor, Michelle Lipkus, at [mlipkus@richmondhill.ca](mailto:mlipkus@richmondhill.ca).*