

100 Youth Who Care make a huge difference in just one hour



By Brock Weir

In 2016, men and women from across Aurora and Newmarket learned what a difference they could make in just one hour. Ladies met to form a local chapter of 100 Women Who Care, a group that meets quarterly and, with a \$100 buy-in from each member, can raise a significant amount of cash for a local charity or non-profit in little more than 60 minutes. Not to be outdone, the gentlemen got involved, spinning off into the grittier ?100 Men Who Give A Damn.?

Now, the youth are stepping up to the plate.

Earlier this winter, dozens of youth converged on the Aurora Public Library for the inaugural meeting of 100 Youth Who Care Central York Region. Open to all youth in Aurora and Newmarket between the ages of 10 and 17, the mission is to inspire youth to contribute to their community, engage youth in local initiatives to help others, and empower youth to create positive change on the local level.

The group was founded Jenny Cooper, a parent and member of the local 100 Women Who Care chapter. She sensed an opportunity for youth to become involved in their own group, she says, in efforts she and her husband have made to ensure their own children are aware of the needs that exist in Aurora and Newmarket, including volunteering at shelters over the holidays.

?We just hoped other youth would share that same passion that we do to be able to contribute meaningfully within our communities,? says Ms. Cooper. ?We worked in partnership with 100 Women Who Care and we have three youth ? 11-year-old Sydney Cooper of Aurora Grove Public School, 13 year old Christopher Davis of St. Jerome Catholic Elementary School, and 10-year-old Alex Cooper of Pickering College ? who are instrumental in organizing, implementing and facilitating the meetings. And they have been busy ? they did a presentation to the 100 Women Who Care group and each of them went to their local schools and conducted presentations in front of their peer groups at schools.?

In the end, they indeed found that that passion is there amongst the youth and had over 20 teens out to their very first meeting, numbers which they hope to foster and grow ahead of their second meeting this February in Newmarket.

?The meeting was phenomenal and our 20 youth were accompanied by 15 adults, which was amazing,? says Ms. Cooper. ?The incredible thing about the meeting was it was 100 per cent youth driven. It is not just about a passion to help and give back, it is also an opportunity to be instilling in our youth leadership and life skills that are going to be able to benefit them in the future. Sydney, Christopher and Alex did everything; they did the welcome, they did the agenda, they did a 10 minute PowerPoint presentation explaining how the initiative works to an audience, and it was just incredible to see.?

Meeting quarterly, the Youth need to bring \$10 to each meeting ? a more realistic figure than the \$100 required by the 100 Women Who Care and the 100 Women Who Give A Damn. It is designed to be inclusive to all youth and maximize the opportunity for everyone to participate.

The first time around two youth spoke in favour of two charities they researched ? Yellow Brick House and Welcoming Arms ? and having absorbed the information, the youth at large got their ballots and voted for the recipient, ultimately directing their collected \$380 to Welcoming Arms.

?We are really excited to be able to expand our reach. Next steps include working with the Boards of Education to obtain permission to be able to share our meeting dates openly with all students,? says Ms. Cooper. ?That needs to be approved by the Board and would enable us to get into a lot of the different schools. It is a phenomenal opportunity to be with a group of positive and like-minded people and in a really short period of time, because we appreciate that youth and parents are busy.

?In a really short period of time within one hour every three months together we can have a huge impact on the lives of other youth in our community. Often we feel that as one individual it is hard to make a difference, so the power of this is we bring 20, 30, 40, 100 youth together for an hour and suddenly, as a group, they are really, really helping positively impact the lives of other youth in need throughout their community in a way that wouldn't be feasible if they were trying to do it on their own.?

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, February 22, from 7 ? 8 p.m. To become involved in 100 Youth Who Care, visit www.100youthwhocarecentralyorkregion.com.