

Adventurers set to 'power' you up at library next week

By Brock Weir

Some come to learn, others come to connect, and some still come for a place to get warm or a quiet place to work.

Last year, Cindy Shaver of the Aurora Public Library (APL) found this last point in particular to be true.

Camera in hand, she wandered around the Library taking photos when she happened upon two thirty-somethings hard at work. When she asked them what they were up to, they explained they were entrepreneurs looking to take their business to the next level.

'Sometimes [being an entrepreneur] is isolating and they wished there was something where young entrepreneurs could get that spark and share ideas,' says Reccia Mandelcorn of APL. 'Cindy was intrigued, as was I, and I thought this would be a really interesting project to take on.'

Enter four area entrepreneurs who decided to take their work into

their own hands, hitting upon a winning formula in the process. These individuals are set to bring their success stories to the Library next Thursday, November 12, for a TED Talk dubbed 'Entrepreneurs in Residence: Powering Innovation.'

Running from 7- 8.30 p.m., the talk features James Chang of StartUp York, Paul Dutton, President and CEO of Snap'd, fitness and lifestyle expert Jennifer Ettinger, and publisher James Tonn.

'We heard Markham Library had taken on an Entrepreneur in Residence program along with Start-Up York,' explains Ms. Mandelcorn. '[In selecting the four speakers] the theme was people who could tell good stories. Part of it is the entrepreneurial spirit and powering innovation, and part of it is really a human interest story about how someone breaks through a mold and tries something new.'

Mr. Chang, for instance, was a husband and father who left his job as an executive to be his own boss. He is now a business coach and consultant working with young people, and others who are 'starting new adventures' to connect them with resources and funding. He will be speaking about how he was able to break away from something that was very secure and 'corporate' to develop something on his own.

Mr. Dutton's experience in expanding one photo-based newspaper to what is becoming a worldwide newspaper chain will speak about how a different idea can really grow, she says. The same can be said about Ms. Ettinger, who took her interest in fitness and women's issues and parlayed that into an entire philosophy based around women and their dreams.

If you have visited Cineplex recently to see the Matt Damon movie, The Martian, Mr. Tonn had a hand in that through his own start-up. Leaving a job in municipal procurement, he co-founded an e-publishing company that took on the novel on which the movie is based.

'He's soaring,' says Ms. Mandelcorn. 'Again, he had something really secure and growing and he just decided to leave because it was always something he wanted to do. They are not going to be coming to talk about their business, because that is not what this is about. It is about the journey of innovation. Even if you are not interested in starting your own business, it really is a human interest story. These people are all adventurers and that is what we hope people will take away. Some will take away concrete information about what they might want to do if they want to break free.'

'This is a nice, solid start of people who have experienced journeys and we hope other people will be brave in helping others break through,' she adds, noting she hopes this is the first in an ongoing entrepreneurial series. 'And this just goes back to those two young men Cindy met that day who said there were other entrepreneurs out there but didn't know how to meet them.'