

Thursday's Volunteer Fair kicks off busy season for Aurora's youth

By Brock Weir

The 2018-2019 school year is now in full swing, and if you're trying to figure out how to get a head start on the 40 hours of community service you need to put in to get your diploma, head over to the Aurora Family Leisure Complex this Thursday afternoon to learn all you need to know.

On Thursday, September 20, from 4 to 7 p.m., the Town of Aurora will host the annual Youth Volunteer Fair, which brings together over 20 community groups from within Aurora and from across York Region.

It is a chance to learn about current and upcoming volunteer opportunities in the area that might be that perfect fit for you and your interests.

?The aim of the fair is to let youth know about all the different opportunities for them to not only get involved in their community, but to find ways of giving back,? says Julie Stephenson, Youth Programmer for the Town. ?We know students usually have a minimum requirement of volunteer hours to graduate, but volunteering is also something that is really important to their own development so they can learn about their communities, get a sense of pride from giving back, and also develop some really great hands-on and interpersonal skills from engaging in that opportunity, as well.?

The Youth Program keeps teens informed on these opportunities throughout the year via their drop-in programs and through other avenues, but this is a chance for them to seek out several avenues all in one place.

?I think that every youth is all individual in terms of what their interests are and we do notice that teens start out by going towards opportunities they are interested in,? says Ms. Stephenson. ?They perhaps want a career in veterinary studies, so they might see an opportunity at the OSPCA. We often try and highlight opportunities they might not come across in their daily life. We know things like the Terry Fox Run they come across in school because a lot of fundraisers the teens and schools will run in the school setting, but we also try and pull in organizations that work with other service groups, whether it is older individuals or more marginalized individuals to give youth a chance to experience or to meet those people and learn about these other opportunities.?

Following the Youth Volunteer Fair, one of the next big events for local teens is the second annual Youth Innovation Fair.

A huge hit when it was launched last fall, this year's Fair is set for November 14, and all youth in Grades 4 to 12 are invited to apply to become a part of the process.

?We are extending participation a little bit from last year, but there will still be a cap on how many can participate this year. We're encouraging people to get their applications in early. Applications are due by November 1,? says Ms. Stephenson. ?We are encouraging anyone who is in that Grade 4 ? 12 range who has an interest in innovation or creating solutions for their community to put their thinking cap on and apply to the fair.?

For more information on the Volunteer Fair, the Youth Innovation Fair, or how to apply, contact Julie Stephenson at 905-727-3123 x3128 or email jstephenson@aurora.ca.