

Third Aurora Scouts celebrate Diamond Anniversary of youth enrichment



By Brock Weir

They say that variety is the spice of life, but, if you ask a Scout, they light beg to differ.

SPICES, in fact, very well might be the spice of life and it is a philosophy that has served Aurora Scouts well into their seventh decade.

You might not have known it, but this past Tuesday, February 13, was Scouting Day in Aurora, a day declared by proclamation of Mayor and Council to mark the 60th anniversary of the 3rd Aurora Scouts.

Mayor Geoff Dawe proclaimed February 13 in their honour, recognizing Scouts Canada as Canada's "leading not-for-profit youth organization, offering challenging programs for youth across Canada."

Scouts, he said, provide programming and activities facilitated by "a network of caring, dedicated volunteers" as well as provide "volunteer-driven opportunities that enrich the lives of local youth by giving them a positive and constructive outlet for building self-confidence, learning life skills, contributing to their community and the world around them."

The proclamation was received by long-time Scouter Kyle Munro, now a Beaver leader who started off as a youth in the 3rd Aurora group.

"The Scouting Movement has a long history in Aurora providing quality volunteer-driven opportunities for enriching the lives of local youth by giving them a positive, constructive outlet building self-confidence, learning life-skills, the importance of teamwork, and contributing to the community and the world around them," said Mr. Munro, who was joined by his son Henry, in showcasing an array of historic scouting mementos now on display at Town Hall. "At a time where Scouting Canada faces many challenges in remaining relevant as an activity in the lives of youth, the opportunity to be here today to recognize the longevity of this group is one that should be truly celebrated."

For Scouter Cheryl Stoltz, Commissioner of the 3rd Aurora Scouts, this relevancy has always been clear.

Ms. Stoltz first became involved in the organization 18 years ago when her husband and elder son were actively engaged in the group.

"At the time, they needed leaders," she says. "I saw how much fun they were having and how much fun my husband was having as a leader because there are so many opportunities. "There are so many wonderful social activities through Scouting, but there is also a lot of training I have been able to transfer into my job that has really impressed my employers as well. I'm a teacher and I learned things that I take back to my job about getting along with other people, dealing with bullying, about sporting activities and coaching."

But what the leaders get out of the program is just gravy "the real measure of success is what it brings to the youth they lead.

"Scouting allows youth to experience the world in a way they never would have a chance to," says Ms. Stoltz. "There are so many unique opportunities through scouting "jamborees, international work experience, international volunteering, national and international camps, meeting other people from all the cultures right across Canada and the area. Third Aurora actually hosted 33 Venturers from the UK this summer and we put them up. It allowed our youth to find out about other countries and make

connections and friends that they can go visit in other countries.?

The club focuses on teaching values ranging from environmental stewardship through cleanups and tree plantings, providing leadership opportunities for kids as young as five, chances to learn new skills, and hone a sense of belonging.

?We have six areas of Scouting that we like to call the SPICES ? Social, Physical, Intellectual, Character, Emotional, and Spiritual ? and we balance it out by looking at the environment, leadership, healthy living, citizenship, creative expression, beliefs and values,? says Ms. Stoltz. ?Scouting is a personal journey of growth that develops the whole person with a great support system.?

As much as it is about personal growth, working together the 3rd Aurora Scouts have solidified deep roots within the local community which continue to thrive and, according to Mr. Munro, these roots run alongside even deeper ones.

Aurora United Church, which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year, has sponsored the 3rd Aurora Scouts since the very beginning, a relationship which barely had a hiccup in the aftermath of the church's disastrous fire in 2014.

To ensure this relationship continues to thrive, however, those leaders are all important ? and they are always looking for more.

If you are a parent who has a child enrolled in any level of Scouting or have children around that age, Ms. Stoltz encourages you to become involved.

?Parents today just drop their kids and run, but one of the benefits of scouting is when you join, you get to spend very intimate time with your child doing things as you grow together,? she says. ?It is really worthwhile, it is like a breath of fresh air. When you're at work and you're taking a walk out in the woods and clear your head. Here, if you have a bad day at work and then you have this time with your child it is just amazing.?