

Tom Ethans, Executive Director, Take Pride Winnipeg at the SpeakUp on Garbage Expo, November 13, 2010.

<http://www.speakupwinnipeg.com>

Transcript:

>> Richard: Tom Ethans is the executive director of Take Pride Winnipeg. It is a charitable organization dedicated to inspiring community pride and raising public awareness and promoting citizen responsibility in making the City of Winnipeg clean and beautiful.

Take Pride Winnipeg has educational programs that they run in schools around the city; a mentor program for high school and university students who teach four one hour classes on litter graffiti and environment and civic pride to grades four and five students.

The Paws Pride and Action in Winnipeg schools for middle school students to do positive things in their community including litter abatement, graffiti removal and murals, and Take Pride Take Action, where motivational speakers visit the high school to mentor students in making a difference in their community.

The Team Up to Clean Up campaign where volunteers help to pick up litter around the city in the spring and fall.

Is key stone program of the organization.

Over 35,000 volunteers pick up the litter in May and June and another 10,000 in the fall.

Garage bags are provided for the groups by Take Pride.

Bag Up maybe is one of the newer programs where students are asked to bring in plastic bags, this year 130 schools participated in the program, one rural school collected 19,000 bags.

The schools receive a recycled plastic frisbee and the top schools receive a bench made from plastic bags.

Tom also started a mural program in Winnipeg for local artists and since 1998 Take Pride has commissioned over 200 murals throughout the city, and the city won an international award from Keep America Beautiful for its mural program in 2005.

Welcome Tom Ethans.

>> Take Pride is about community pride and raising public awareness and promoting public responsibility in making our city beautiful.

We have done that since 1991, and we are really excited about what we are trying to do to inspire people to be more proud of our city.

And the key for our organization is through education.

And I'm going to go through our programs again just to give you a real good idea.

Our Team Up Clean Up campaign started in 1991 and what it is is simply we wanted people to go out and help to make the city cleaner by picking up litter.

We have a severe litter problem when the snow melts.

We do a litter index every April, where we go out on the streets and one being no litter and four being a lot of litter, and generally our streets in April are rated about a 2.5.

And that's not very good and there are areas that are 4s and I can tell you every bad street in the city as we drive about 500 kilometres of city streets to look at where the litter is and raise public awareness.

That's where we get schools, community groups and individuals to go out in the spring and pick up litter for us.

Again in the spring time we had this year 33,000 volunteers go out and pick up litter and in the fall we had another 10,000 volunteers.

That's a lot of people going out to do their part to make a difference.

And it is mostly school children, they go out in and around their school yards and around their neighborhoods and go pick up litter but we have a lot of community groups that go out as well.

And by June our city looks a little better.

And then by October, it is needing more help.

Unfortunately we have that problem, one of the problems that we have is because we don't have enough garbage containers on our streets, there are currently around 1100 garbage containers on the streets within Winnipeg, some of them are new with recyclable parts to them.

There are probably many areas of the city that need another 100 on their streets, and overall I think we need to at least double the number of garbage containers and recycle containers on the street.

There are places where I walk four or five blocks and you don't see a garbage container.

A lot of people in this room can say the same thing.

Because of that people won't hold on to their cups and plastic bottles and they will drop them on the street and that causes one of the problems that we have.

We just started this cigarette butt program, which in terms of percentage of litter on the streets is 28 per cent.

That's a huge number.

What we did is we went out and bought seven containers and put them on Osborne between Stradbrook and River as a pilot program.

The Downtown BIZ has put out these containers on the streets so people can put the butts in those containers rather than on the streets.

As they don't decompose and they go into the sewer system and rivers and lakes, what we want to do is try to get people to use them to lower the amount of litter out there, including cigarette butts.

It is working.

We in one, I think, 20 minute session of having my summer students go out on Osborne, pick up, I think 5,000 cigarette butts in 15 minutes, that's a lot.

Our education programs, this is really our key, is getting into the schools to educate the kids about how they can make a difference in the community.

Our mentor program is a great program for high school students to go and act as mentors to a grade four and five students to teach them about litter, graffiti and environmental and civic pride.

The younger students look up to the older students as role models, the students get a great training in leadership, public speaking skills and it is a great program for both.

Paw is a great program for middle school students to go out on a monthly basis to do something in their community to make a difference.

In the north and north end, we won an award from Keep America Beautiful a couple of years ago for their program they had 94 students involved in the program they were involved in litter clean up, they were involved in doing murals outside of their school, they actually have a bench that they had built and put outside of the office while people were waiting to go for their buses or go see the principal, and they also raised money for child hunger fund and they went to visit seniors, so it is a great program to show that middle school kids can actually make a difference.

Take Pride Take Action is new program that we are launching for high school students where we go and make presentations to show where they can also learn to make a difference through volunteering, through doing things to make Winnipeg a better city.

We piloted the program this spring and it was tremendously successful and we actually piloted it outside of the city up in Oxford House, Manitoba, with the North West Company helping us and one of the students was so taken by the program that she moved down here for the summer and worked for us over the summer on one of our programs.

Take Pride in Reading is a program that we have done where you go in to read to kindergarten students and we read environmental stories, and these young children really are learning at that age in kindergarten, grade 3, they are learning about the three Rs, they are learning about how they can make a difference and after we sat down after our reading sessions and we were at one school talking about how bad it is that people litter and how it affects the neighborhood, a kindergarten student put up her hand and she said, "for every action there is a consequence."

And I said that's it, I'm done.

I was driving down the street one day and I saw plastic bag floating down past the street light, so we wrote a book, Take Pride Winnipeg Timmy the Tumble Bag, a bag that escaped and gets used, recycled and turned into a frisbee.

We thought it was a great idea, take it to the school and get the kids to bring back plastic bags and we will recycle them and turn them into frisbees.

We had about 90 schools get involved in the program and it was a great success we thought.

Last year we had very, we did not have a lot of time to get the program organized, we only had 71 schools get involved, but still a very good program, and one of the things we also did is we went to a company called TRIX in the states and they gave us some benches made out of plastic bags and we gave those to the top schools.

This year we partnered with Multiple Material Stewardship Manitoba, and when I was out of the city we had 92 schools get involved in this one month program in the city and 42 schools outside of the city got involved, so 135 schools all together.

This is a school and these are the frisbees that the children received, and I will show you the frisbee, this is made out of recycled plastic from WHAMO, the original frisbee makers. This school had 211 students they went out and put an ad in the paper saying hey, we want everybody in the community to get involved in the program and in neighbouring communities, in one month, the month of October, they brought in 19,282 plastic bags.

It was unbelievable.

That's the bench made out of plastic bags.

It is heavy.

I almost put my back out lifting that bench the other day.

That's the number of bags that we have collected so far from the 135 schools - that represents about 60 per cent of the bags that are being collected so far.

That's about 400,000 plastic bags that will not be going to the land fill.

It is a great program that has worked very well.

I want to read you some comments from the teachers. "We started collecting at the beginning of October and collected 2,067 bags, the students were really pumped up and they are going to collect all year until next October. The landfill will love us, thank you for letting us participate."

"What a month! Our total is 9,719. It is more than anything that I dreamed of. When we first started my prediction was around 3,000, I suppose I underestimated the determination of our students and their families and friends from many different places.

I will say now we are a little school with a big heart, more importantly our students learned that recycling is a better alternative than throwing out.

Thanks for helping us teach this."

From Newton school, 9,719 bags, 24 students.

The future of our garbage, it is great here everybody talked about composting, I think that's important.

I heard talk about the bottles, refunding bottles we used to do that when we were kids and gather our candy money from getting pop bottles on the side of the road.

I talked to somebody in Hong Kong and they have a bottle refund program there, and the store owners don't want to give up the bottles so what they do if you buy a Coke, they take the bottle open it up and pour it into a plastic bag and give you a straw in the plastic bag and they keep the bottle.

That's just, I just heard that, I couldn't believe it.

Landfill fees are something that we need to increase around the province so that it will help to increase the amount of recycling that we document our landfill fees are too low

and I think they need to be increased dramatically so that we will then see more diversion away from the land fills.

Auto bins are a health hazard, they are a fire hazard, auto bins are also a great place for illegal dumping and I think we need to eliminate them from the city and get back on to the way we used to do it.

Organic and yard waste, I can't tell you how many times I put a check beside the words of organics, I think that everybody who mentioned organics can stand up applaud themselves because I think it is what we need to do. Education is a key not only for the students but for the general public, we need to get people to understand that one, there is a roof shingle recycling program in Winnipeg.

Two, bike parts, somebody mentioned bike parts, a teacher that I know is just starting up a program at Elmwood high school, they are going to build 48 bikes, students are going to be building 48 bikes from rebuilt bikes parts they find at the land fill or other places.

So we need to reduce, re-use, recycle, but as our first speaker said this morning we need to respect the environment, we need to respect mother earth and we have to do it together.

If everybody in this room walked out of the room today and picked up a piece of litter, that's 150 pieces of litter off the streets of our city.

We need to work together to make a difference to make Winnipeg the cleanest, most beautiful city in North America.

Thank you.