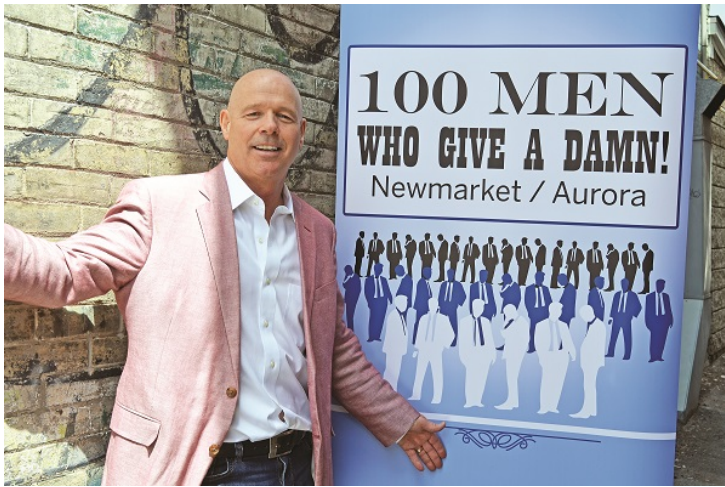


100 Men Who Give A Damn keep it simple for a good cause



By Brock Weir

Frankly, dear readers, they do give a damn ? and next month 100 of them plan on coming together to give one unsung local charity 10,000 reasons to smile.

Just ask representatives from Doane House Hospice who, this past spring, were the first benefactors of the inaugural meeting of the Newmarket-Aurora chapter of 100 Men Who Give a Damn. An offshoot of the growing ?100 Women Who Care? movement, both organizations bring together people from the community with a commitment of bringing \$100 to each meeting. The end goal is to raise \$10,000 in just one hour for the charity or cause of their choice.

?When somebody told me about this thing where you could make a difference in an hour, it resonated with me,? says Michael Smith, a founding member of the local 100 Men Who Give A Damn movement. ?There are some charities that scramble and claw just to keep the lights on and I think sometimes we forget about that.?

Ahead of each quarterly meeting, members are invited to nominate the charity of their choice. A week before the gathering, the nominations are thrown in a hat, three contenders are pulled, and representatives from each respective charity are invited to come and make a pitch on the work they do in the community and how they are prepared to spend the \$10,000 likely to be raised once the members vote.

?This came out of the blue for a lot of people and at our first meeting we only had about 40 people there,? says Mr. Smith. ?We only gave them two and a half weeks' notice and that was kind of on purpose; I wanted to have an organic groundswell.

?We explained the guidelines ? and we call them guidelines because guys hate rules ? and number one is we're all here for the same reason of giving back. Number two, if you can't come but you have committed, find a wingman and make sure they bring your money. Number three, majority rules. Where this speaks to most men is you can put your own personal flair on it. Guys hate meetings, so keep it simple, keep it transparent, keep it local, and keep it to scenarios where I think a lot of great charities get eclipsed by some of the bigger ones.?

Another guideline is they have to give it to one charity decided by the majority and there is ?no backing out.? At their last meeting, however, halfway through counting the donations, a member who chooses to remain anonymous, came up to Mr. Smith and said, ?No one is coming out of here without any money. Here is \$3,000.?

So, at the end of the night, Doane House Hospice received funding for their arts programs, as did Belinda's Place, the Newmarket

shelter for single women in York Region, and the Jennifer Ashley Children's Charity, which helps seriously ill children and their families with special treatment needs, medical expenses, and financial assistance in times of need.

"As people walked out of the room that night, all I heard was, 'I get it now. I have three friends I'm bringing,'" recalls Mr. Smith. "I think 100 Men Who Give A Damn resonates with people and it can only grow. It means we can have more impact with more charities."

"I would suggest there are people out there who have never had the opportunity to give and never thought they would have much of an impact. One hundred bucks times one hundred guys has impact. That is the reason why I do it, but why do I give a damn? It is my home. When we started our business, my partner and I concurred in basic core values: help and never do anything you wouldn't do for your own mum and dad.

"You've got to do it in your community, otherwise you wait for someone else to do it and you will never get it done. Here, the math is simple, it's quick, it's transparent, there's no admin cost and it's local. If you want to have an impact on a local basis in a very short period of time, 100 men times 100 bucks is great math.

The next meeting of 100 Men Who Give A Damn will take place at Aw, Shucks! on September 22. For more information on the group, visit www.facebook.com/groups/100menwhogiveadamna.