

Walk of fame generates positive publicity

Scarborough Town Centre lies in a diverse community in Toronto's east end.

In recent years, gun violence in a few of Scarborough's troubled neighborhoods tainted the entire community; sensational headlines mistakenly portrayed all of Scarborough as violent. Then in 2003 Scarborough was at the epicentre of a deadly outbreak of SARS. Negative press and public perceptions were hurting the community's morale.

Implementation

Scarborough Town Centre wanted to reinforce its position as a leading corporate citizen, become more of a destination and celebrate the achievements of local residents. It joined forces with STAND UP Scarborough, a civic-pride initiative. The center threw its support behind one idea especially, a Walk of Fame honoring Scarborough's most accomplished citizens.

The inaugural Walk of Fame induction on May 17, 2006, celebrated the achievements of 10 people who made significant contributions to Scarborough in sports, entertainment, arts and culture, community, health, science, education and even pioneering (honoring posthumously the first settler of Scarborough, in 1799, David Thomson).

The center persuaded STAND UP to locate a permanent Walk of Fame monument at the shopping center, with bronze stars representing each inductee embedded into the floor on the center's busiest promenade.

The center sought a financial backer and media and hospitality sponsors. It also wanted a government official to sanction the event, giving it more credibility and increased publicity. It also recruited 60 volunteers from local schools to help with the events and hired global public-relations firm Edelman.

On May 17, the inductees enjoyed brunch at the Delta Toronto East hotel, later heading to the center for a press reception. A piper and town crier guided the inductees to a stage at center court for the first part of the ceremony, emceed by a popular local radio host. Then everyone, including the audience, moved to the Walk of Fame site, where each inductee unveiled their own star. Nearby, a freestanding display featured descriptions of the inductees' accomplishments. The display remained for several weeks. On the night of the induction, a gala raised money for three local groups working to stem violence among local youth.

Walk of Fame

Scarborough Town Centre
Scarborough, Toronto

Expenses: C\$91,306 (center's cost)

Owned by: Omers Realty

Managed by: Oxford Retail Group

Professional Recognition: Jim Houliston, SCMD, marketing director Justin A. Deknatel, general manager



Celebrations continued at the shopping center for three more days, with an entertainment roster of 14 local cultural groups.

Results

Scarborough Town Centre got a \$25,000 sponsorship from condo developer Tridel, and another \$10,000 worth of services from the Delta Toronto East and *The (Scarborough) Mirror* newspaper, which provided full-page advertisements twice. The center formed a partnership with *The Mirror*, which featured the Walk of Fame's yearlong evolution in a series of stories, ads and inserts and on its Web site.

The center also persuaded the Mayor of Toronto, a local councillor and a representative of the Premier of Ontario to sanction the event.

The Walk of Fame garnered substantial editorial and feature coverage in all of the major English and Chinese newspapers across the greater Toronto area and in national newspapers. In all, it garnered 17,145,038 impressions, or 1,491 column inches of print, and 35 minutes and 30 seconds of prime broadcast news time.

The monument will continue to bring the center attention, and future additions to it will guarantee further publicity. ■