

Edmonton salutes the military

GREG HUDSON

Since the capital city became home to the Edmonton Garrison base in 1995, the city has looked for ways to celebrate and encourage the military families that come from across Canada to make the capital region their home. Edmonton Salutes is a committee made of business, political and military leaders that has taken on the responsibility of recognizing the Armed Forces and all they do for our city and country. The committee also facilitates business partnerships to achieve their goals.

City councillor Ed Gibbons is co-chair of Edmonton Salutes. He spoke with *Edmonton Commerce*

News about what the city is doing, and can do, to help.

Edmonton Commerce News: How did Edmonton Salutes get started?

Coun. Ed Gibbons: It started when Edmonton became the mega-base back in August 1995. Calgary had had a Calgary Salutes committee for years and did a good job. We really did a bit of a copying act from Calgary. It is the big city showing thanks to the military for being here.

We get involved with the dispatch of soldiers and their coming home. Then it branched out into

other things, like Red Friday.

Tell me about that.

Red Friday is a program recognizing those who died in uniform. It is one Friday a year set aside where support is shown by everyone wearing red. We're finding that we are changing our scope with it.

The first year, we held it in November in Churchill Square. Even though it was a cold day and the first time we ever had it, the response wasn't too bad. The following year it was held in the summer at Capital Ex.

Continued on page 10



Coun. Ed Gibbons (centre) puts up yellow ribbons along 97th street with volunteers from Goodwill Industries as a way of letting members of the military know how valued they are in our community.

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from page 7

We tried to make a human Canadian flag. We noticed growing pains, and last year we still did it during Capital Ex, but returned it to Churchill Square.

Next year, we're not going to have any specific location. We're going to just publicize the day and ask everyone to please wear red – let people buy into it on their own.

What about when soldiers return home?

That's quite big. We arrange for legionnaires, military brass and peo-

ple from our committee to meet the airplane at the airport. Whenever an airplane is coming in, we have a couple of fighter planes from Cold Lake come down and escort the plane in.

When they get off the plane, we give them coffee and doughnuts. Then, they get on military buses, and we have city police escort them through a predetermined route.

Sometimes we take them down Whyte Avenue, through downtown, so people on the street can wave, and show support, up until 97th

street, where we have yellow ribbons tied around trees all the way up [to the Edmonton Garrison].

Even though the soldiers are tired and eager to get home, I think it gives them a jolt to see Edmonton residents being out there. The soldiers really like it.

Are Edmontonians catching on to these programs?

They are and they aren't. I think those who want to listen really do listen. On Nov. 24, city council will be looking to build a statue and

erect it on 102 Ave. The statue will not be small. It will be a tribute to the navy, air force and army, past and current veterans. We'll see if that's something the people like. We're going to look for sponsors to help the city build it, because it could cost anywhere from \$7 million to \$10 million.

How can businesses get involved with Edmonton Salutes?

In conjunction with the military, we're looking for workforce placement – to help soldiers when they

want to get out of the military find work and education.

Also, the Armed Forces needs help with daycare. Right now, not all 2,500 people in uniform transferring into the city are men. The family at home needs help.

The other item that has been asked for is to work with home developers to build housing in or around Edmonton. Right now,

there isn't enough private living quarters for all the military. They are sprinkled throughout the region.

It sounds like you are doing a lot, and that there is a lot to do.

And the city respects it. I don't have any trouble going back to council for budgets.

Charities get help with number-crunching

KIMBERLY IRETON

From animal shelters and cultural centres to violence prevention and wetland conservation, the varied people, communities and causes that make up Canada's more than 83,000 charities all strive to make an impact on the world we share.

Additionally, every single registered charity in Canada must follow very specific rules when it comes to the tax benefits they receive. While they do not have to pay income tax, all Canadian charities must file annual returns, including financial statements, with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).

It's a daunting task for charities. Sorting through the nitty-gritty details inevitably leads to many questions and issues. Because of this, along with other compliance problems, CRA was finding that many registered charities did not follow all the

regulations set out for them. Therefore, CRA decided to fund a variety of charity tax-focused projects to help Canada's charities understand the rules which govern them. Charity Central is one of those ventures.

Charity Central is a project of the Legal Resource Centre of Alberta. The project's official aim is to provide information and resource materials to registered charities in Canada in order to help them comply with the requirements of the Income Tax Act.

The work that the three Charity Central staff members do is varied. With three defined areas of focus – receipting, fundraising, and keeping proper books and records – the staff might be researching new tax requirements one minute or fielding a telephone question about a golf fundraiser the next.

Continued on page 15



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