

DATE: November 28, 2016

TO: Mayor Stokes and City Councilmembers

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SUBJECT: 2016 Bellevue Essentials Program Report

This is for information only, no action is required.

### **Background**

Bellevue Essentials just completed year four of providing an on-ramp for emerging leaders in Bellevue to learn about the nuts and bolts of Bellevue City government and to encourage participants to become more civically engaged. Bellevue Essentials recently welcomed 34 new graduates to its ranks of over 125 alumni, who now participate in *Bellevue Essentials Extended*, the formal alumni group that hosts several community service and educational events each year.

### **Key program goals**

- Expose participants to the structure and inner workings of City government.
- Have class members build familiarity with government process and decision making and achieve a comfort level participating in City government.
- Create a network of engaged, educated individuals who serve the City, and the broader community.
- Expand diverse learning community that will be accessible to the City for future civic engagement opportunities.

### **Bellevue Essentials Resident Class**

#### **Profile 2016**

- ◆ 16 female, 18 male
- ◆ Geographic representation of 14 of Bellevue's neighborhood areas
- ◆ (BelRed and Newport absent)
- ◆ Age range from college students to retirees (20's- 70's)
- ◆ 33% of class members live in multi-family housing.
- ◆ Professionally diverse, including those employed in tech industries, engineering, education, non-profit, marketing and volunteer arenas.
- ◆ Ethnically diverse including people of Asian, African American, Hispanic and Middle Eastern descent. 44% non-Caucasian.
- ◆ 63 applications received, 34 class members graduated.
- ◆ Priority was given to Bellevue residents.

### **Curriculum**

Bellevue Essentials is a 9-week program on Wednesday evenings. Class sessions include a light dinner, and a combination of speakers, tours and interactive exercises. Session topics include history, demographics, diversity, public process, parks, arts, neighborhoods, economic development, planning, utilities, environmental stewardship, finance, transportation, public safety, development services and affordable housing.

### **What are Essentials graduates doing?**

- Eleven of our graduates are now serving on boards and commissions including Parks, Arts, Human Services, Planning, Environmental Services and Youth Link.
- Several alumni are serving on city advisory committees such as the Citizens Advisory Committee for the Grand Connection, the Independent Salary review board, the Affordable Housing Technical Advisory group, and the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network.
- Other city programs that our graduates are lending their leadership skills to include our Neighborhood Mediation program, CERT, the Police Academy, Bellevue Youth Theater and several of our neighborhood associations.
- In the general community, the Bellevue Chamber, Hopelink, Lifewire, Eastside Baby Corner, VIBES, ELLA, Eastside Heritage Center, Congregations for the Homeless and Eastside Neighbors Network are just a few of the non-profits in our community where our Essentials graduates are volunteering.
- Bellevue Essentials Alumni published a Volunteer Resource Guide, to direct residents to volunteer opportunities within the City and community.  
<http://www.bellevuewa.gov/volunteering.htm>

### **Bellevue Essentials Employee Edition**

Many requests from employees to participate in Bellevue Essentials led to the creation of an employee class that recently graduated its second cohort of 30. Employees place a high value on the opportunity to build relationships interdepartmentally and to gain a clear vision of the City as a whole. Evaluations reflect that employees gain both understanding and pride in the services the City provides, and increase effectiveness in their job performance.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluative comments from both resident and employee class members consistently praise the high level of curriculum, overall organization, and the expertise and passion of staff presenters. Participants are impressed and appreciative of the commitment of the City Council and City leadership to the Bellevue Essentials program.

Some comments from the 2016 class:

“Bellevue Essentials demystified the many City services and processes. It made me feel that the City is approachable to a regular citizen. I now know how to navigate city resources.”

“The access to senior staff, Councilmembers and departments was extremely impressive. I was struck by how appreciative these people are of community involvement.”

“I was astounded by how much the City offers and realize how lucky I am to be living here!”

“There is no question that Bellevue Essentials has sparked a fire!”

**The next Bellevue Essentials class is scheduled for September – November 2017.**