



DATE: November 18, 2019

TO: Mayor Chelminiak and City Councilmembers

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Community Development

SUBJECT: Bellevue Essentials Synopsis

This is for information only; no action is required.

Background

Bellevue Essentials just completed year seven 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. On November 20, Bellevue Essentials will welcome 37 new graduates to its ranks for a total of 236 alumni, who participate in *Bellevue Essentials Extended*, the alumni group that hosts social, community service and educational events throughout the 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 and educated individuals who serve the City and the broader community.
- Expand the diverse learning community that will be accessible to the City for future civic engagement opportunities.
- Foster an alumni group that participates, volunteers and engages in the Bellevue community.

Bellevue Essentials

Resident Class Profile 2019

- ◆ 16 male, 21 female
- ◆ Geographic representation of 15 of Bellevue's neighborhood areas (Bel Red absent)
- ◆ Age range from 16-67 with 50% under age 50
- ◆ 14% of class members live in multi-family housing
- ◆ Professionally diverse, including those employed in business, technology, health care, law, education, sales, non-profit and retirees
- ◆ Ethnically diverse including people of Asian/So. Asian/Japanese, Latino, and multi-racial descent, class is 51% non-white
- ◆ 74 applications received, 37 class members accepted
- ◆ Priority was given to Bellevue residents, class includes two non-residents and nine previous applicants

Curriculum

Bellevue Essentials is a 9-week program for residents on Wednesday evenings. Class sessions include a light dinner and a combination of presentations, tours and hands-on exercises. Session topics include history, demographics, diversity, public process, parks, human services, neighborhoods, economic development, community development, development services, utilities, finance, transportation and public safety. This year staff were able to include two optional tours: an immigration exhibit at City Hall which showcases the City's diverse workforce and a tour of Global Innovation Exchange, highlighting the partnership between the University of Washington and Tsinghua University in Beijing.

What are Essentials graduates doing?

- The current City Council includes the first Bellevue Essentials alum.
- Four alumni are serving or have served on the East Bellevue Community Council.
- 35 alumni are now serving on Council-appointed boards and commissions including Parks, Arts, Human Services, Planning, Environmental Services and Transportation.
- Numerous others have served on City advisory committees and regularly attend public meetings and events, such as Neighborhood Leadership Gatherings.
- Other City programs that alumni are lending their leadership skills to include Conflict Resolution Center, Community Emergency Response Team, Police Academy, Bellevue Youth Theater and numerous neighborhood associations.
- Alumni also volunteer throughout the Bellevue community serving with non-profits that include: the Bellevue Chamber, Hopelink, Lifewire, Eastside Baby Corner, Tiny Trees School, VIBES, ELLA, Eastside Heritage Center, Congregations for the Homeless, Backpack Meals for Kids, Eastside Neighbors Network and more.

Bellevue Essential Extended alumni organization formed in 2015

- Bellevue Essentials Extended now holds monthly programs to keep alumni connected to each other and to the City. These include coffee and conversations, an annual alumni picnic, Jubilee Reach Day of Service, shelter meal preparation and serving. At alumni request, educational offerings will be expanded in 2020 and will include training workshops on listening skills, which is planned for January.
- Bellevue Essentials staff offer 1x1 meetings to graduates to help them identify desirable areas of engagement.
- Bellevue Essentials Extended publishes the "Make a Difference" Volunteer Guide to direct residents to volunteer opportunities within the City and community, available on the City website under Resident Resources/Volunteering.

- Alumni have volunteered annually as a group at Jubilee Reach Day of Caring since 2016 and volunteered at the City of Bellevue holiday event at Crossroads Community Center in 2017 and 2018.
- Several alumni have lent their language skills and volunteered at Welcome to City Hall, May 2019 and several other alums volunteered at Bellevue Essentials recruitment events or class sessions this season, as well as at the Bellevue Essentials graduation.

Bellevue Essentials Employee Edition

Now in its fifth year, employee interest remains high, with 45 employee participants. With nearly 200 new employees this year, it is difficult to keep up with the demand for the employee version of Bellevue Essentials. A total of 189 employees have completed the program since 2015. Employees place a high value on the opportunity to build relationships interdepartmentally and to gain a holistic view of City operations. Evaluations reflect that employees gain understanding and pride in the services the City provides, improve cross-departmental collaboration, overall job performance and come away with recognition that they make a difference as public servants.

Evaluation

Evaluative comments from both resident and employee class members consistently praise the high level of curriculum, overall organization, commitment of Council and City staff, as well as the expertise and passion of staff.

In 2018 staff were unable to accept 50 percent of our resident applicants. In order to better serve the community and grow the leadership base and civic engagement at the City, staff are exploring adding a second cohort in a daytime class in 2020.

Some comments from the 2019 class

“Absolutely engaging and fantastic! I love the tours and group presentations. Bellevue Essentials is so helpful in becoming a better and more informed citizen.”

“Thank you for such an informative and fun filled afternoon. At the end of the session, I went home, packed a picnic basket, picked up my husband and re-created our tour. We knew we loved our adopted community, but now I am excited to share the “secrets” I’m learning through Bellevue Essentials with my neighbors and co-workers!”

“I have to say that the Bellevue Essential program blows me away in every aspect of the expectations, including the speakers, content and logistics etc. The speakers/owners from each department are very well prepared and engaged in the process; the varieties of exercises from onsite tour and demo, role-play and project discussions are very helpful to understand how the city government works; the overall program team is also very well organized to ensure everyone have a great experience. I feel very lucky to be part of the learning experiences and I encourage everyone who is interested in Bellevue civic matters to take advantage of this great program!”

The next Bellevue Essentials class is scheduled for September – November 2020.