



INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: December 9, 2013	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Snow Angels Program (CS13058) (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Vicki Woodcox Acting General Manager Community and Emergency Services Department	PREPARED BY: Erica Brimley 905-546-2424 ext.4815 Bill Atanas 905-546-2424 ext. 2935
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:
 Not Applicable

Information:

The City of Hamilton partners with Volunteer Hamilton to deliver “The Snow Angels Program.” This program involves the recruitment of volunteers to clear snow on sidewalks, walkways and driveway entrances left by snow plows for eligible seniors and individuals with disabilities in the Hamilton area. The cost to administer the program is \$100,000. The funding covers the cost of staffing, marketing materials and communication, rent, utilities, insurance, equipment rental, financial fees, volunteer expenses and other incidentals.

Background

- In December 2005, Council approved a snow removal program that would later be called the Snow Angels Program.
- In January 2006, the City of Hamilton signed a Letter of Agreement with Volunteer Hamilton to administer the program (i.e. marketing; assessing eligibility; recruiting volunteers; and matching volunteers with eligible applicants.)
- In November 2008, Council approved the program to be an ongoing annual commitment and requested that updates regarding the program’s impact be

provided to the Emergency and Community Services Committee. The contract for this program has been renewed yearly.

- On August 20, 2009, a program evaluation was presented to the Emergency and Community Services Committee. The evaluation concluded that investment in the program would continue to build capacity for increasing volunteerism in the community.
- In November 2011, Snow Angels Program (CS11093) was received by Council. This report provided information regarding the number of volunteers matched to residents, the capacity and demand of the program and the number of volunteers for the 2010/2011 winter season. It also provided alternative snow removal services and outlined the benefits of the program.

Program Update

In the 2012/2013 winter season, the City of Hamilton experienced six snow falls. To ensure the best use of volunteer resources, Volunteer Hamilton conducted an internal audit to determine best practices for tracking returning volunteers and eligible residents. The chart below for the 2012/2013 season illustrates a decrease in the total number of eligible residents.

As of November 26, 2013, there are a total of 282 eligible residents requiring snow removal. Of the 282 residents, 117 are matched with a volunteer and 165 are unmatched. There are 50 volunteers, some of whom do snow removal for more than one resident. Volunteer Hamilton anticipates these numbers will increase and will continue with their efforts to recruit new volunteers and residents for the program.

Figure 1 illustrates the number of residents “matched” to a volunteer and those that are “unmatched” (they do not have a volunteer) over the past 5 years, the total residents in program and the current status going into the 2013-2014 snow season. The Snow Angels Program has historically experienced an increase in the number of applicants for snow removal rather than the number of volunteers for the program.

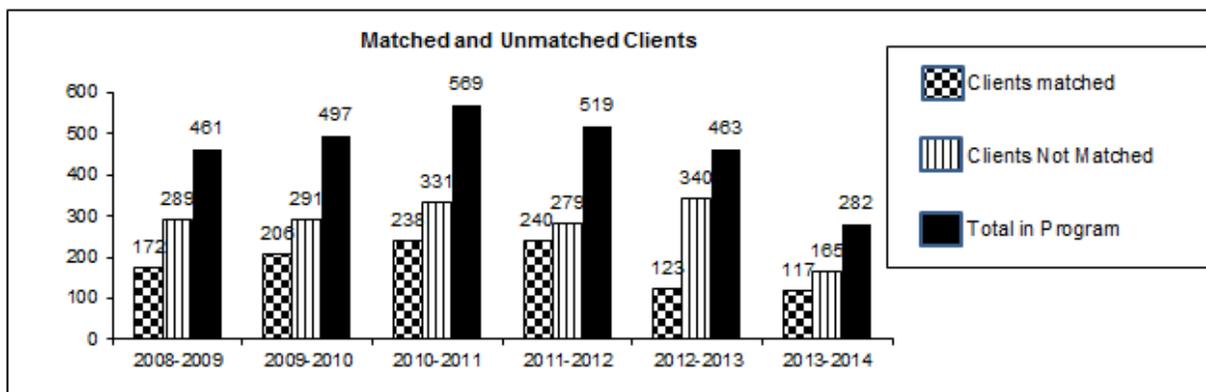


Figure 1

Challenges

Volunteer Hamilton has reported challenges in recruiting volunteers for the Snow Angels Program. It is difficult to keep student volunteers as the number of times that there is a major snow fall is unpredictable. As a result, students may move on to other volunteer opportunities to achieve their required volunteer hours for graduation. Students tend to choose to discontinue volunteering for the program when they graduate from high school. Some volunteers are unable to participate due to the physical requirements of the work. Lastly, some volunteers cannot afford the travel costs involved in going to people's homes throughout the City to shovel their snow.

Volunteer Hamilton has developed a marketing strategy to attract volunteers to the program. They have made efforts to increase the program's profile through social media, local television and radio outlets, print media, flyers and advertisements on buses. They have also participated in outreach activities with the McMaster Student Union, the John Howard Society, grade 10 career and civic classes and at public events.

City Staff have met with Volunteer Hamilton staff to explore new ways to recruit volunteers and promote the program. Ideas include linking with Neighbourhood Community Development Workers; broader distribution of the flyers; learn from the Macassa Lodge volunteer program; promote self-initiated community placements with Ontario Works participants; promote the program in ward newsletters and meet with the minor hockey league and Hamilton Bulldogs to highlight the opportunity to volunteer at Snow Angels.

Conclusion

- The Snow Angels program is the only program of its kind in the community. While there are low-cost alternatives to the private/for-profit snow removal services, none offer a free, volunteer-driven service to those most vulnerable in the community.
- The benefits of the program are evident in the fact that snow was removed within 24 hours in 99% of the snow events and Volunteer Hamilton has registered minimal complaints from service recipients in the past two years.
- Volunteer Hamilton is committed to increasing the number of volunteers by setting a target goal of a minimum 50% increase city wide through the methods discussed above. As indicated in report ECS08054(a), the Snow Angels program:
 - Creates a sense of community and neighbourhood by encouraging direct civic involvement through service to neighbours.
 - Engages volunteers in meaningful service ensuring that those less fortunate in our community have access to their community.
 - Contributes to the reputation of the City of Hamilton as a city that cares.

For the 2014-2015 Snow Season, City staff will perform a full evaluation of the Snow Angels program and will report back to committee in September 2014 with the evaluation outcomes and recommendations for the 2014-2015 snow season year.