

Action Swift Current recognized nationally

Swift Current may be small, but there's a new buzz in the air.

The city's recent spurt in activity is partly due to Action Swift Current (ASC), an organization made up of 200 community leaders and volunteers dedicated to business growth.

ASC's success was acknowledged last month when it received the Economic Development Achievement of the Year award.

Handed out by the Economic Developers Association of Canada, the prize had a long list of criteria for applicants: creativity or innovation of the project, community involvement and effectiveness of the delivery mechanism.

Marty Salberg, director of business development for the City of Swift Current, said it was an honour for the group to be chosen out of over 200 entries. He accepted the award on behalf of the organization in Sydney, Nova Scotia on Oct. 19.

"At the end of the day, if you're going to grow your community you have to have your community working together with positive feelings," Salberg said. "And with confidence that your economy is going to grow and with that comes investment. We're seeing that daily."

Chuck Thomson, chairperson for ASC, said he's thrilled that the work of so many people is being nationally acknowledged.

Thomson said the main thrust when the organization started over two years ago was that no one could bring in an agenda from his or her business.

"The biggest challenge for us as an organization is keeping people excited," Thomson said. "We started out with fifteen or twenty...we went out, we phoned and we got 200 volunteers and that got people excited."

Thomson said members contacted businesses around the city and asked them what was standing in the way of expansion.

ASC, with the help of city council, then implemented the business retention and expansion model. New and expanding businesses are given tax breaks for up to four years.

Thomson said a positive attitude is key to community-based development.

"People say, 'What did Action Swift Current do?'" Thomson said.

"Well, to tell you the truth, what did we do? We just created, I believe, some positive attitude."

Thomson finished by saying the true test of ASC's success will be the percentage of young people who choose to stay in Swift Current.

"I think what we need to say to our kids is if you're going to get a university degree you've got to go (elsewhere). But there are opportunities here as well - we need them to stay."

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