

BMO Bank of Montreal Building Community

By Debra Clark

"Volunteering is important on so many levels" states Kathy Schwab, Branch Manager, BMO Bank of Montreal, Camrose. On a corporate level, BMO Bank of Montreal is very pro-active and has a policy in place for the employees which each employee must understand and agree to. This is reinforced with employees each year when Schwab calls a special staff meeting to review the bank's policy on volunteerism and gather staff input.

"On a corporate level, BMO Bank of Montreal believes "caring for the communities in which we do business enriches the organization and its people, while giving back to the community." They do this by "consistently demonstrating high standards of social and corporate responsibility, both as an employer and as a corporate citizen." In addition the bank "fosters a spirit of involvement in the communities we serve and encourages participation community activities," adds Schwab.

Schwab states, "Each employee has the option of contributing through payroll deduction to the BMO "Fountain of Hope" charity. This is an employee-run charitable program which is fully supported by BMO. The bank covers all administrative costs and matches all donations. The branch employees volunteer on the Board of Directors who approve where monies are allocated from the fund, however employees have the option of having their particular payroll contributions directed as they see fit. Under the umbrella of this program "if an employee, pensioned or permanent, volunteers for an organization, they may apply for a grant ranging from \$250 to \$1,500, pending approval of the Board" for their particular cause. This could potentially benefit a sports team, coached by an employee, a program delivering hot meals to senior citizens, or a medical facility raising funds for a needed piece of medical equipment.

The "Fountain of Hope" was founded in 2000, and as a national foundation has raised in excess of \$33 million. The bank supports many volunteer roles that make our community a great place to live. The local branch has been involved in hosting various events. Some of the events hosted during banking hours and manned on shifts by staff include barbecue which raised funds for Alberta Beef on Founder's Day, Mother's Day Teas which benefited Breast Cancer, involvement in the Junior Diabetes Walk for the Cure. As well there have been everything from Pancake Breakfasts and providing and selling "Hope Bracelets", the proceeds of which benefited our local Food Bank. The staff do everything from coming in early to prepare for breakfasts to cutting vegetables for barbecues.

"We believe that caring about our work, our colleagues and our communities is just a part of who we are individually and as a corporation. For information on corporate volunteer programs, call the Volunteer Centre of Camrose and District.