

The Rotary Career Symposium

Our Mission Statement

“The Rotary Career Symposium shall provide a forum for all Manitoba students and adults to receive job and education information to make informed career decisions”

The Rotary Career Symposium is a career and education information symposium targeted at the following groups:

- Students from Grade 7 to Grade 12
- Post-secondary students
- Adults looking for a career change, re-entering the workforce or thinking of going back to school
- Parents
- Educators

Established originally in 1980, and re-established in 1997 after a 3 year hiatus as the Rotary Career Symposium, it continues to play an integral role in assisting these groups in making positive, informed decisions regarding career and education goals.

The Symposium is run under the supervision of a Board of Directors comprised of volunteer representatives from:

- The Rotary Clubs of Winnipeg (9 clubs)
- Human Resources Development Canada
- Manitoba Education and Youth
- City of Winnipeg
- Manitoba School Counsellors' Association
- Aboriginal Sector

Objectives

The Rotary Career Symposium will provide a venue where students and adults can visit informative, interactive displays, attend valuable speaker sessions and meet business and education leaders to learn more about possible career and education options.

The Symposium will encourage and motivate the participants to continue their education in order to obtain the career of their choice.

The Symposium will function in association with government, educational institutions and Manitoba's leading industries to focus on the career and job opportunities that are available in our province.

The Symposium will make every effort to reach as many people as possible who may be interested in a career change, are looking to pursue further education or are looking for more information on possible paths to take after high school.

Program Activities

The Rotary Career Symposium runs once a year, early spring, over two days. There are two main activities that take place during the course of the Symposium.

A) Exhibitor Showcase

The Rotary Career Symposium consists of an exhibitor showcase highlighting leading industries, employers, post-secondary institutions and trade associations. It is necessary to involve those potential exhibitors and speakers who represent a cross section of various industries including: government and law; commerce and management; aerospace; hospitality service; technology; communication; science and health; trades and transportation and companies that provide employment services. In addition, post-secondary institutions from across Canada and the United States are also targeted.

Exhibitors are encouraged to present interactive booths that stimulate feedback and attract interest. Each year, awards are presented to the exhibitors with the most interactive, most informative, best overall, most friendly, red road and FUWA (fascinating, unusual, wow and amazing).

To determine the award recipients, each booth at the Symposium is visited and evaluated by students from the Youth Committee and these students also present these awards at the Exhibitor Breakfast Reception.

B) Speaker Sessions

Speaker sessions run throughout both full days of the Symposium, occupying approx 10-15 seminar rooms, allowing room for thousands of participants to attend these sessions.

These speaker sessions cover a wide range of topics including, Education; Health and Medicine; Information Technology; Agriculture; Architecture Design; Skilled Trade Careers and Technologies; Engineering; Government, Law and Transport; Commerce and Management; Career Path Development; Tourism, Hospitality and Recreation and Discussions on Aboriginal Trends.

Speakers are asked to highlight the fundamental skills needed for further development towards, and within, their occupation. Speakers challenge students to consider lifelong learning, and how to explore their own potential for personal growth. Many sessions capture student's imagination by using hands-on activities to encourage teamwork and to educate them about group dynamics.

Speakers come on a voluntary basis and are encouraged to return year after year by the positive feedback they receive.

Rewarding Partnerships

A) Rotary Partnership

Partnership between the Rotary Clubs of Winnipeg and the Symposium began in 1997 and will continue as long as the Symposium is in existence. The dedication to community involvement and commitment to volunteerism that is demonstrated by Rotary members is a large part of what makes this event a reality.

B) Aboriginal Partnership

The Rotary Career Symposium Board has partnered with the Aboriginal community for the last several years to make career-related and employment information available to Manitoba's Aboriginal youth. Statistics Canada projects that Manitoba's Aboriginal youth demographic is the youngest and fastest growing segment of Manitoba's population.

Each year, the Rotary Career Symposium sets aside a designated section ("The Red Road to Aboriginal Exhibits") on the show floor for representatives from the Aboriginal community.

C) Community Partnerships

For the last few years, complimentary passes have been provided to Income Assistant recipients, Employment Centres, The Salvation Army and other organizations that assist people on a limited income. Approximately 1000 people each year take in the opportunity to visit the Symposium.

As well, interested parents are welcomed to accompany their registered child, at no extra cost, in the evening of the Symposium.

Benefits

Business

- Demonstrate community involvement
- Opportunity to explain the training and education that is needed to fill specific jobs
- Opportunity to meet future employees and to showcase trades and skilled work

Educational Institutions

- Post-secondary institutions have the opportunity to promote their school's facilities, programs and services to potential students
- Participating businesses will often refer attendees to a specific college, university, or vocational institution where they can develop their employability skills

Students

- Students are more informed about career options
- Greater optimism about their futures
- Allows them to network with other students, speakers, exhibitors and volunteers
- Opportunity to hear first hand experiences from in-the-field practitioners
- Encourages life-long learning
- Exposes them to opportunities throughout the Province of Manitoba
- Gain the skills needed to become more employable
- Improved understanding about the demand of industry and the workplace

Educators

- Offers the largest comprehensive career symposium in Canada which compliments the career and transition education happening in Manitoba schools
- Assists educators in providing additional tools to help their students plan for the future
- Exposes a tremendous learning opportunity for teachers to find out more about labour market demands
- Provides networking potential among educators, as well as, exhibitors, speakers, students and parents

Parents

- Opportunity to learn with their child in an interactive environment
- Gain knowledge about the changing labour market landscape
- Exposure to their own potential opportunities

Stakeholders

- Committee members build relationships and enhance networking opportunities
- Hundreds of volunteers and thousands of volunteer hours are committed to this project
- Powerful example of community involvement by all volunteers that creates a positive impact on the community at large

Society

- Encourages life-long learning by promoting career and education choices
- Develops more informed decision makers

Development of Long-Term Relationships Between Business and Education

The Rotary Career Symposium will continue to play an integral role in bringing together business and education leaders to introduce them to the future generation.

Businesses are realizing the tremendous value in developing connections with youth in their communities. Many companies and organizations appreciate that they can direct interested youth or adults to many of the educational and vocational institutions at the Symposium. For many Manitoba schools, this Symposium is promoted as an event that allows students to add to their Employability Skills Portfolios, which are based on the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills 2000+.

The bridge between business and education is growing stronger due in large part to the efforts of the Rotary Career Symposium.

Achievements and Positive Change

The Rotary Career Symposium was developed by many community organizations that came together to form the Board of Directors. Each member believes that employability skills are nurtured and developed at home, at school, at work and in the community. As a result, the Symposium brings together hundreds of volunteers to help Manitobans build their employability skills to enter, remain and progress, through the world of work.

Every year, the Symposium continues to grow and improve by making positive changes and attendance is usually around 15,000 attendees. It has grown from an exhibitor base of 98 in 1997, to 155 in 2007, proof of the increasing success of the Rotary Career Symposium. Booths are becoming more elaborate and interactive and are challenging participants to ask questions and to get involved.

In 2000, an Aboriginal committee was formed to look at how the Symposium could work more closely with the Aboriginal community. Since then, the Career Symposium has evolved to include an aisle designated the "Red Road to the Aboriginal Exhibits", which continues to grow in both size and popularity.

In 2001, the Board of Directors decided to launch a website that would publicize the event, as well as be a resource for the participants of the Symposium during the event, and year round. It continues to evolve with new ideas and information. It is found at: www.career-symposium.org

The Rotary Career Symposium annually encourages schools to pre-register students and to provide them with transportation by school bus or transit. Pre-registered students and groups, receive a discount of \$1.00 off the \$3.00 admission fee and in some cases, the schools pay this fee. Each student is provided with a Show Guide that contains speaker topics and times, as well as valuable questions to ask both exhibitors and speakers. These questions are designed to help them understand and apply needed skills to move confidently into the future. Educators are provided with a Teacher's Study Guide, containing the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills 2000+, that offers tips on how to help their students prepare for their visit, and what to cover when discussing career planning in the classroom.

As the Symposium develops, new exhibitors and new partners from the business and education communities come on board, and more attendees visit the Symposium. The interest shown from all groups involved, speaks highly of the work the Symposium is doing.

Measurement of Results

Every year evaluations are taken from the attendees, educators, exhibitors and speakers. Those evaluations are analyzed and recommendations are made for the following year. For example, many participants thought it would be beneficial if the exhibit area was divided according to sector, making it easier for attendees to find the information they were seeking. This new concept was extremely successful for both participants and exhibitors.

Ability to Be Used As a Model

Since 1997, the Rotary Career Symposium has established itself in the community by helping students and adults seek out valuable information on career and post-secondary education options. We challenge other communities across Canada to recognize the essential need to foster a relationship between business and education leaders, and encourage them to play an active role in building a knowledgeable and skilled workforce.