



Reaching out to the community!

Christopher Burns, co-founder of the *Rochester Young Professionals*
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I read with interest Mollie Tubbs' brief essay ("Extend Hand", *Democrat and Chronicle* 6/10/03) describing the frustration she has experienced from limited contact and response from the broader community with respect to her group's efforts, suggesting a sentiment of community indifference.

To offer a dramatically different perspective, our organization, the *Rochester Young Professionals*, has enjoyed an abundance of interest from the business and broader community, and this has not been simple coincidence. We have invested real time and efforts to reach out proactively to businesses, organizations and individuals across this community, with consistently positive results. Our experience proves a healthy dose of initiative really goes a long way.

Whether *RYP* is *Networkin' at the Inn* with the *August Group*, tackling tough topics like Upstate Regionalism in connection with the *Power of Three*, or just getting people better connected to the wealth of cultural, volunteering and professional resources in and around Rochester, our members are truly on the move, and the business community notices.

It is not difficult to understand that the business community may remain unmoved by purely social activities like pub crawls and board game nights. While these certainly can be a fun way to get people together to meet, the business community expects real substance, taking notice of those who not only identify problems but invest real efforts in implementing solutions. Idle conversation about the present does not create change, and businesses do truly have serious issues that consume their daily attention.

As an organization, we roll up our shirtsleeves and plunge into solving the real issues that confront this community—and I certainly invite others to join us in these efforts. Take for example our long-time partner, *RochesterCares*—this group of talented individuals has made peer volunteerism and community investment truly a way of life. We would all do well to live by the *RochesterCares* example, and *RYP* proudly highlights each volunteering opportunity to our members and especially encourages volunteer participation from the broader community.

We recognize that only in Hollywood will the "if you build it, they will come" notion find fertile ground. The real question is not, 'what can this community do for us?' as some keep asking, it is 'what can WE do for this community?' *RYP* is proactively going after opportunities for our members to get involved and making great connections across the entire community, rather than simply expecting they will find us.

Beyond limiting our attention to just one group of individuals over a finite time period, the greater opportunity really exists to continue the growing momentum we've created across this community – *Fighting for Rochester's Future* – to build a vibrant future for *everyone* in Rochester. The key is simply to show real leadership: think bigger, and make it happen.

To learn more, see: www.RochesterYoungProfessionals.org