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Steve Anderson shares his journey into politics

Written By Pete Richardson

Shelburne Deputy Mayor, Steve Anderson is a crusader for inclusivity of all people in his community and fervently believes that one should be judged on their aims and accomplishments.

He also serves as the County Councillor of Dufferin and is the first born Canadian in a family of six siblings, with Jamaican parents.

Steve grew up in Jane Finch, in Toronto, attended the University of Windsor for his Honours Baccalaureate in criminology, started Law School at the University of Detroit Mercy and finished his degree at the University of Ottawa.

He was subsequently hired by the Toronto Transit Commission to work in their legal department as a litigator.

Considering his present position as a vocal advocate for civil rights and the inclusion of all people and races in todays society, it begs the question why choose litigation law rather than civil rights of some similar field?

Steve's answer was simple. He did not start out imagining himself leading some great advocacy charge. Rather, he knew he wanted to make a difference in the world and saw the law as a potential pathway to achieving it.

Steve said the TTC gave him the chance to build his own platform. Once he found himself working for such an iconic institution, people saw him as a possible resource.

He was a lawyer when working for the TTC and someone who could go into schools to speak with youth. This resulted in many opened many doors for Steve.

He was asked to speak to schools and many organizations about his experiences. This, in turn, reverberated with his bosses and their bosses and they supported it wholeheartedly.

In part, because of its benefit to the youth of the community and in part, because it reflected positively on them.

Steve and a friend of his, Ian, worked together in Steve's old neighbourhood of Jane Finch, to help youth there. They assisted in achievement awards for academics, community service and other accomplishments. They have done this for over ten years and still continue today, but with COVID-19 precautions.

From Steve's work in Toronto he learned a lot about the potential to impact change through politics and a seed was planted.

The seed sprouted when he had just moved to Shelburne with his family and the municipal elections were underway. He thought about entering the race, but realized that he knew nothing about the issues of his new community, so he waited. But while he waited, he began to follow the local political scene and learned about issues affecting Shelburne

He did not yet know the community, but he knew the issues. It was then that the Town asked for members to become a part of the Transit Task Force. It was a perfect fit for a TTC veteran.

The task force was composed of CAO John Telfer, Ron Monroe and Steve. The plan was to run a transit system in town for two years and then have Go Transit take it over. Unfortunately, the plan never came to fruition, but it made Go Transit aware of the town and its desire for transit.

Several years later, Steve was part of bringing Grey County transit buses to Shelburne.

It was shortly after the task force dissolved, that Councillor Tom Egan suddenly passed, creating a vacancy on Town Council.

Steve decided that he should throw his hat in the ring and try to become a part of the community's political machine.

He faced an uphill battle. Tom Egan had been a much loved member of the community for many years and he left very big shoes to fill, no matter who took over, let alone a new resident, not well known in the community.

After going through the selection process, Steve won the appointment and the rest is history, but, not history without effort.

Realizing how big of an achievement he had just accomplished, Steve decided that he had to hit the ground running if he was to have any chance of wining the hearts and minds of Shelburne's residents and continue in his political endeavours.

His first goal was to honour Tom Egan and he did so by getting Council to create the Tom Egan Community Service Award.

When Steve was going through the selection process and even before that, on the Transit Task Force, the question came up as to what he thought could be done to make the old and new resident communities more inclusive of each other.

The slogan, ?Shelburne Stronger Together? originated from this thought. This is what characterizes Steve's community involvement, bringing the community together.

He was the first councillor in Shelburne, to hold a ?meet and greet ? at the Town Library, where constituents could come and meet him, hear his views and present their questions and opinions.

Following his first 10 months, Steve let the community know who he was and what to expect. Then came the 2018 municipal elections.

Steve knew he would have to be exceptional to win the seat, but he believed in his vision for the direction of the community and so he took up the challenge.

Following his election to the position of Deputy Mayor, his political life has become almost as demanding as his career as an attorney.

Partially, the reason for this is because of his dedication to welcoming and supporting all the different cultures and populace diversities of Shelburne, while working to help solve the many municipal government problems in the Town.

When asked if he would consider running for Mayor, Steve was adamant, he will not.

He thinks Wade Mills is a good Mayor and a good working partner. They share a similar vision of the Town and Steve is happy being the Deputy Mayor.

Serving as Mayor is demanding rand requires a considerable amount of time, which Steve feels, for him, would be better spent continuing his current efforts.

With the next election only two years away, Steve has put thought into what he wants to do and what he has been able to accomplish.

He told the Citizen he isn't interested in provincial or federal politics, but is content being Deputy Mayor and staying in municipal politics, where he can get things accomplished.

Steve likes to be able to point to the promises he made and kept, he is proud of his personal brand and what he stands for. He has not done all that he wants to do in Shelburne, he may never, but he wants to try.

Steve believes that a man is judged by his accomplishments, not just by his promises and in municipal politics he can live by his own standard and not the will of the party. He can listen to the people and he can try to get them what they want and so for the foreseeable future he is happy being on Town Council.