Introduction

Virtual Ventures is a non-profit organization with the goal of promoting engineering and technology to youth in Ottawa. We do this by offering high quality, hands-on workshops, summer camp programs, in-school workshops, and community events for youth who have completed Grades JK-11. In 2017, Virtual Ventures reached more than 3000 youth.

Virtual Ventures is housed at Carleton University and all programs are developed and delivered by undergraduate engineering, design and science students. The delivery of our programs is made possible through our partnership with Carleton University’s Faculty of Engineering and Design, as well as support from our national organization, Actua, and many local businesses that have invested in our programming.

We use a hands-on approach where all topics are connected to the lives of our participants so that they can discover firsthand the excitement and opportunities in engineering and technology. Virtual Venture’s programs offer supportive, creative environments that nurture the self-esteem of participants and enable them to develop skills and attitudes to succeed in the future.

Community support

Virtual Ventures’ success is made possible by the support of our corporate sponsors, private donors, and tireless volunteers. We rely on the financial support of sponsors and donors whose contributions enable the continued development and growth of our workshop and camp programs and make these programs accessible to low-income families. Your sponsorship enables us to purchase new materials, make bursaries available to ensure the accessibility of all programs, and supports the instructors. In addition, we need your support to develop new programs to reach an even wider audience in Ottawa.

History of Success

In 2017, Virtual Ventures was awarded funding, as a network member of Actua, from the Government of Canada’s CanCode program to scale up hands-on coding and digital skills programs.

In 2015, Virtual Ventures was awarded the Actua Experience Award – National Girls Program. Our commitment to the all-girls club and camp format, ensuring there are female role models – both through mentors and well-trained instructors – and our dedication to sustaining girls’ programming with the new girls outreach coordinator position were some of the reasons Virtual Ventures was selected for this award.

In 2015, Virtual Ventures was awarded a NSERC PromoScience grant to help enhance its girls programming. This grant was renewed for an additional 3 years (2016-2018).

In 2012, Virtual Ventures was awarded the Actua & GE Canada Award for Leadership and Innovation; an award that was created in 1998 as a way to recognize member organizations that have best exemplified the Actua spirit of innovation over the past year.

In the last 24 years we have reached more than 30,000 youth. We have grown from 150 participants our first year to more than 3500 annually. We have also demonstrated the impact of our programs by participating in a formal research project conducted by Actua, our national organization. With continued support, we will grow to meet the demands for high-quality, educational programs for youth.
Sponsorship Options

As a Virtual Ventures sponsor, your contribution will enable the continued development and growth of our workshop and camp programs. This includes purchasing new materials, making bursaries available to ensure the accessibility of all programs and supporting the instructors. In addition, we will use your support to develop new programs that will reach an even wider audience in Ottawa. We have developed a variety of annual opportunities to meet the objectives and needs of your company. The options outlined below can be further tailored to reflect your business’ specific objectives.

Platinum Sponsor ($8,000 and up)
As a Platinum Sponsor, your company will receive the following recognition:

- Logo or name in large print on camper T-shirts**
- Logo or name in large print on Virtual Ventures web page
- Logo or name (direct mention/tag) promoted through our social media, Facebook and Twitter
  - Minimum 5 direct social media mentions/tags
- Opportunity to Sponsor/Host Events
- Logo or name in large print in our Final Report
- Logo or name in large print on our camp posters*

Gold Sponsor ($4,000 to $7,999)
As a Gold Sponsor, your company will receive the following recognition:

- Logo or name in medium print on camper T-shirts**
- Logo or name in medium print on Virtual Ventures web page
- Logo or name (direct mention/tag) promoted through our social media, Facebook and Twitter
  - Minimum 2 direct social media mentions/tags
- Logo in our Final Report

Silver Sponsor ($1,000 to $3,999)
As a Silver Sponsor, your company will receive the following recognition:

- Name in medium print on Virtual Ventures web page
- Name in medium print in our Final Report

*The bulk of our camp posters are printed early in the year therefore donations must be made before February in order to get your logo in the first batch of posters. We will be happy to work with you on an alternate recognition.
**Donations must be made by May 20th in order to get your name or logo on camper T-shirts
Participant Sponsor (multiples of $265 or $300)
Every donation of $265 (4-day week) or $300 (5-day week) allows one child to attend the Virtual Ventures Engineering and Technology Camp on a full camp bursary. As a Participant Sponsor, your organization will receive the following recognition:

- Organization’s name on Virtual Ventures web page
- Organization’s name in our Final Report.

Charitable contributions
Each year, Virtual Ventures has needs for equipment or materials for the smooth running of our camps. The recognition of all in kind donations will be equivalent to the monetary value of the donation.

In-kind donations sought-after for 2018
- 20 Android tablets
- Projectors
- Laptops
- Mentors to engage our program participants through hands-on activities, tours and presentations

In kind donations
If you would prefer to make an in-kind donation to Virtual Ventures, we will provide a tax receipt rather than sponsorship benefits. Information on giving to Carleton (designated to Virtual Ventures) can be found at carleton.ca/giving. Gifts can also be made online.

Part of a National Network
Virtual Ventures is a proud member organization of Actua. Actua provides training, resources (funding and equipment) and support to a growing national network of local organizations offering science and technology education programs across Canada. Actua has a solid history of success and more than 20 years of experience in helping young Canadians develop awareness, interest and skills in science, engineering and technology. Actua provides the infrastructure and resources to ensure quality and sustainability at the local level and to promote synergy among the members – leveraging local innovation for national impact. Actua members reach over 225,000 youth per year in 500 communities nationwide. Please visit Actua on the web at actua.ca.
Objectives

Our dedicated and energetic staff and Board of Advisors are committed to reaching the following objectives:

- Educate and create enthusiasm about technology and engineering for the youth of Ottawa;
- Provide positive, bias free role models for youth;
- Help youth build confidence in themselves and a belief that everyone can contribute to engineering and technology;
- Present university or college as a welcoming, accessible environment to encourage youth to pursue post-secondary studies after high school;
- Dispel stereotypes about who “does” or can “do” engineering or science;
- Create resources for elementary and middle school science teachers that will help them to be creative and confident when teaching science;
- Educate students on the choices they must make in high school so that they have a variety of options when entering university;
- Engage parents, teachers, schools, community leaders, local community groups, and volunteers to enhance programming and avoid duplication.

Our Programs

Summer Day Camps

We deliver summer day camps for youth in junior kindergarten to grade 11 in July and August. Camps provide participants with fun engineering and technology demonstrations, hands-on projects, and some recreational activities. Campers will bring several projects home throughout the week. Past camp activities have included programming, robotics, web design, animations, electronics, game design, other cool multimedia applications, engineering challenges, etc. We also offer specialized camps: a girls-only camp which includes a one night sleep over in the Carleton University residence for the senior girls; a game design camp; programming camp; and an Aboriginal youth only camp. All our camps include mentors who are in the field of engineering and/or technology to provide real life examples and inspiration to the campers.

Local Workshops

Virtual Ventures also delivers hands-on, dynamic science, engineering and technology workshops for students in schools around Ottawa. A wide variety of topics are available that complement the Ontario science and technology curriculum. Past workshops have included Engineering Structures, Clean Water, Pop Bottle Rockets, Programming, 3D Modelling, Electricity, Computer Tear Apart, Chemistry, etc. Workshops are very effective in raising awareness of and enthusiasm for participation in upcoming camp opportunities. Our staff works closely with teachers and school administration to ensure successful workshop outcomes.

Other Programs

We offer specialized engineering and technology clubs in the fall, winter and summer on Saturdays: Girls clubs, LEGO Robotics, Programming and Game Design clubs. We also partner with a number of organizations to engage girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education. For instance, we deliver free STEM activities to Guides and Pathfinders and run activities for OnWie such as Go Eng Girl and Go Code Girl.
Community Involvement

We endeavor to make our programs accessible to all youth. As such, we provide full and partial bursaries to individuals who would not otherwise be able to attend our camps. For instance, we have a partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Ottawa to provide free workshops and full bursaries each year to their students. We also run the Aboriginal youth camp free of charge for 20 Aboriginal youth. For our school workshops, we deliver free workshops in schools in low income neighborhoods.

Program Evaluation and Impact

As part of our ongoing commitment to continuously improve our programs and as a member of Actua, Virtual Ventures has participated in a national research project to formally evaluate the impact of our camps on the attitudes and future intentions of our participants. Actua coordinated this project and Dr. Gail Crombie of the University of Ottawa analyzed the results. The research involved thousands of youth across Canada and provides strong evidence that Actua is creating positive change in attitudes and behaviours toward science. Of the participants surveyed, here are some of the key findings.

As a result of their camp experience:

- 82% stated that their knowledge of engineering had increased
- 83% felt that they were more confident in their ability to do science and technology
- 81% stated that their enjoyment of science and technology had increased

Complete research results can be found at www.actua.ca.

Virtual Ventures will continue to participate in Actua’s ongoing evaluation of our programs. We look forward to sharing 2017 results with you when they are complete. In addition to camper evaluations, teachers complete evaluations on our workshops. The workshop evaluations are always encouraging and we are committed to incorporating feedback for continuous improvement.

Our Commitment to Partners

Virtual Ventures is committed to finding innovative ways to reach our audience. By reviewing the feedback given to us by our participants and by our partners, we have been able to build on our existing programs and launch new initiatives. Our promise is to maintain the quality of programs as we grow. Our future development depends greatly upon the support of the universities and colleges, the involvement of industry and the enthusiasm of the students who staff the program. We are determined to strengthen this foundation in order to have an even greater impact on the region’s youth for many years to come.
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