

# CASTLEGAR NEWS

## Awards gala set for March 6

By Jed Anderson - Castlegar News

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The Castlegar and District Chamber of Commerce will hold an awards banquet on March 6. The purpose of the evening is to recognize the achievements and accomplishments of Castlegar's businesses.

Entertainment for the evening will include guest speaker Joe Roberts, the "Skid-row CEO", as well as music and dancing.

"It's going to be an evening to recognize the business community for the products and services that they provide within Castlegar and the region," said Chamber of Commerce executive director Pam McLeod.

"Joe Roberts is our keynote speaker and this e-mail came to me within the office and there was a note attached saying, 'If this guy's legit, he's worth looking into.' So I started doing some research into him and he's an absolutely incredible individual," explained McLeod.

"He was addicted to drugs and alcohol - you name it, he was on it. He was eating out of dumpsters down in Vancouver, sleeping on the streets. He was on the path to probably death. He just decided to make a change and come clean and he's done a tremendous job," she said.

Roberts is now a millionaire. "He's CEO of his own computer technology company. He's done very well. He's married with children now, a very successful man. He has started up a foundation now and he targets specifically the area of drug and alcohol addiction," said McLeod.

McLeod explained Roberts will make an excellent speaker.

"He's been able to craft himself into a motivational speaker through this as well, and (he) really moves the crowd when he speaks. He's been recognized for many different awards right across the country."

The chamber of commerce reworked a document Roberts uses in his presentations, which will be used in the presentation. Roberts will also be talking to local youth as part of his visit to Castlegar. "We've been able to bring Joe in a day or two earlier and he will

be going to the Trail and the Castlegar high schools and speaking directly to students about drug and alcohol addiction. It'll be really interesting."

Cocktail hour will begin at the Fireside Inn at 6 p.m. At 7 p.m., Roberts speaks. "Then it will be dinner, awards and auctions; then kick off your heels and have a good time with the dance," said McLeod.

Roberts is looking forward to the dinner.

"Everyone in that room is either accomplished in reaching their dream or is in the process, and I think that a story like mine, really it's not so much about me as it is a reflection back to the underdog in the struggle that we all face in our families, in our lives and in our businesses," said Roberts.

"And when somebody gets up there and does the Skid-row CEO or overcoming adversity movie, song, poetry, whatever – it's that reflecting back."

"It's kind of like what happened on Sunday afternoon. Every single person in this country became fused together and became one unit."

"I think that what good speakers do is they tell stories, they share insights, they give observations. But more than anything, they get people to look inside themselves," said Roberts.