

Brunton recognized with Community Safety Award for mental health work



Judy Brunton knows all too well the importance of Mental Health.

After her sister was diagnosed with her first mental illness as a youth, Brunton has been a tireless advocate and fundraiser for mental health initiatives within the community, raising more than \$100,000 for local programs in the process.

This past year, Ms. Brunton was recognized by the Town of Aurora with its 2022 Community Safety Award, part of the Community Recognition Awards program.

Presented in the springtime at a ceremony at Town Hall, the Award recognizes "that safer communities only happen when individuals take action to make a difference."

"This year, we are recognizing Judy Brunton for her advocacy and support for the vulnerable population in our communities," said Erin Cerenzia of Neighbourhood Network, emcee for the 2022 Community Recognition Awards. "Judy learned of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) actually by accident when she was trying to find an organization to fundraise for. She was looking for one that particularly held a cycling event as her child at the time was seven and rode his bike everywhere. She found this event with the Canadian Mental Health Association and it was a comfortable fit as in addition to the nice bike tie, her sister had also been going through a difficult time experiencing some mental health illnesses. During her first year of fundraising, Judy went all out and even her son participated in this event by riding 20 kilometres.

"From 2006 to 2015, Judy has fundraised for Easter Seals and since 2015 she has dedicated countless hours of her time to help with youth mental health. Whether it was riding for Mental Health in Motion, fundraisers at Christmas Markets, aligning with businesses, promoting awareness at the Street Festival, and so much more, Judy has raised over \$125,000 and anyone who fundraises knows what a significant number that is.

"If you happen to see the MOBYSS Bus driving around Town, you can thank Judy for her efforts to help keep this mobile health unit engaged in the community. From 2015 to 2019, the MOBYSS Bus helped over 17,000 youth across York and South Simcoe ? some of whom were in an acute state of suicide. Through Judy's efforts, she ensures that this bus is on the road, reaching out to youth in need in our community.

"Supporting CMHA is a love and passion for Judy and this is abundantly clear when you meet her and understand what she has done

for the Canadian Mental Health Association. She is literally protecting and saving lives of youth who otherwise do not have the support, money or means of seeking help.?

Brunton, who was characterized by Cerenzia as ?a shining and hopeful light on a dark day,? said she was grateful for the opportunity to make her community a better place.

?My sister was diagnosed with her first mental illness when she was a youth. She got amazing care and I want the youth of our community to get the same kind of privileges and get all the help they need, so I just want to make them safe as possible by raising money for programs that will keep them going and keep them happy,? she said.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter