

Community Recognition Awards aim to honour those who have stepped up to meet the challenge

The last twelve months have, in many cases, brought out the best in us.

Whether people have been sewing masks to keep their fellow Aurorans safe and healthy, delivering meals to frontline workers, or even helping an elderly neighbour register for and receive their COVID-19 vaccines, community heroes are around us now more than ever before.

And now is the time to step up for your heroes by nominating them for Aurora's Community Recognition Awards.

The Community Recognition Awards are held each year to recognize individuals, organizations and businesses who have gone the extra mile in contributing to their community. Young or old, long-time givers or those just starting out who have made a significant impact right out of the gate, the honours shine a light on the individuals whose work sometimes goes unnoticed.

Nominations for the 2021 Community Recognition Awards are now being accepted through Friday, April 2.

Categories this year include:

- The Youth Volunteer Award, presented to a citizen up to the age of 19 who has made a significant contribution to the community through their volunteerism and demonstrated their commitment to being a positive leader.
- The Senior Volunteer Award, presented to a citizen over the age of 55 who, through their volunteer efforts, has made a significant contribution to their community.
- The Green Award honours individuals, businesses or community organizations who support the protection, preservation, sustainability or conservation of the natural environment and have demonstrated a commitment to a greener community.
- Arts and Culture Award ? Recognizing individuals or groups who have enhanced the community through their support or promotion of culture, music, visual, performing or literary arts
- Community Leadership Award ? Honouring individuals, businesses or community organizations that have ?significantly enhanced the Town through their contribution, commitment and leadership in areas of charitable giving, civic engagement, community events, or community spirit.
- The Good Neighbour Award ? Recognizing ?someone who embodies what it means to be a good neighbour [recognizing and celebrating the simple acts of kindness and compassion that help create connected and vibrant neighbourhoods.]
- Good Business Award ? Saluting ?an Aurora business that has shown its commitment to assisting Aurora's economic prosperity, corporate responsibility, and community involvement through its ongoing support of charitable causes, events, or programs.
- Inclusivity Award ? Recognizes individuals, groups or businesses who have contributed to making the Town a more ?accessible and/or inclusive place to live, work, and play for all people regardless of race, ancestry, national or ethnic origin, creed, religion, age, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, family status or ability.
- Community Safety Award ? celebrates those who are dedicated to the development, promotion, or support of initiatives that improve community safety, recognizing that ?safer communities only happen when individuals take action to make a difference.
- Citizen of the Year ? An annual award recognizing exceptional contributions made by a local citizen to our community, demonstrating ?all-round community involvement rather than a specific activity or contribution.

?Each of our awards are of equal importance,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. ?For instance, with the Good Neighbour Award, there are over 55,000 residents in Aurora and we know there are good neighbours there. We have children playing in playgrounds, events happening, and all that happens because the community is safe and there are people who contribute to keeping the community safe. That is why we have developed the Community Safety Award.

?Then we have our Youth Volunteer Recognition Award and I feel our future is in great hands given the recipients we have had, what they are able to accomplish and what they are able to set out to do, especially given the challenges that youth have had to face in the last year. Aurora is a very green community and we take a lot of pride in its nature, its landscape, its preservation, and the overall environment with the Green Award. Then we have the Good Business Award and you can't even count the good deeds that

are happening here, different industries are helping each other and even businesses in the same category are giving each other a hand-up.?

Aurora's Give Back Awards are traditionally presented at Town Hall before a packed house of recipients, nominators and community members at large.

Last year, due to COVID-19, the ceremony took place virtually. While it was a less glitzy affair, organizers say it enabled more people to take part in the proceedings.

It is yet to be determined how the 2021 awards ceremony will proceed, but a number of options are being considered.

?We're looking at perhaps hosting the actual ceremony outside for the first time ever at Town Park, which is going to take on an entirely different scope and experience,? says Ms. Ware. ?It is going to be mixing enhanced technology with an in-person experience.

?But, before we get to the ceremony, we have to get the nominations in. This is an opportunity to recognize those who have really changed lives and sustained this community in the incredible state that it is in. We're very dependent on the community to actively participate in the nomination process to bring forward those truly unsung heroes so, in a moment of time, we can recognize that they have made a difference. The number of nominations should be overwhelmingly high because we're really in a special place. We need the community to let us know who has made a difference, who has helped them, and who has made the sun shine a little brighter in this past year.?

For more on the program, including nomination forms, visit aurora.ca/cra.

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