

Wendy Browne is Aurora's 2023 Citizen of the Year



Outstanding community-builder Wendy Browne has been named Aurora's Citizen of the Year for 2023.

An active Rotarian and business leader, Browne received the honour on Monday evening at Town Hall from Mayor Tom Mrakas.

Browne, who has lived in Aurora since 1969, was heralded for her work not just with the local Rotary Club, but for her leadership roles within the Aurora Minor Ball Association, the Aurora Newmarket Girls Hockey Association, and more.

During the pandemic, she found the time out of her busy schedule to serve on the Mayor's Aurora Cares Community Action Team, resourcing services to meet the needs of our community," said Mrakas. "On behalf of the Rotary Club of Aurora, she supported the purchase of five iPads that were used by long-term care residents to keep in touch with loved ones during the pandemic and continue to be used by those residents today. She was also part of the Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament 2018-2022 Council term and she served on that Committee for the disbursements of funds.

"She juggles many roles effortlessly" while actively volunteering she's also [been] an award-winning, successful realtor with more than 30 years in the business. She's also a dedicated mother, grandma and friend."

All that before her name was revealed.

After it was clear who this year's Citizen of the Year was, the audience filling Council Chambers erupted in applause, and the Mayor continued the tribute.

"Wendy's compassion, commitment and dedication to our community is inspiring," he said. "Wendy is well-known in our community as the go-to volunteer, with many local organizations leaning on her for her support and her expertise. She has many life-long friends in our community who are thankful for her generosity and hard-work. She is truly a remarkable Town Ambassador.

"Thank you, Wendy, for making our community a better place to live in. Your continued volunteer work, strong connections, and relationships you have built in our Town show your true compassion and devotion to our community. You set a wonderful example for us all to follow."

Browne's impact on the community was exemplified through the nomination process, where community leaders past and present lined up to state their case on why she was the ideal candidate for Citizen of the Year.

“Wendy Browne is a true example of an individual worthy of being Aurora's new Citizen of the year,” said former councillor Sandra Humfries. “A true Auroran, Wendy has been engaged in many local fundraisers and charity events where she gives much of her time in order to ensure the event is successful. I have had the pleasure of working closely with Wendy on many local initiatives, including the Aurora Cares Committee and the Aurora Christmas Dream, which provides a traditional turkey dinner for those in need.

“During the Aurora Christmas Dream, Wendy was able to source out many items for the meal and gifts. Wendy was in charge of putting family care packages together, making them personal and meaningful. On the day of the event, the weather was quite bad, preventing many families from being able to pick up their dinners. Wendy took it upon herself to ensure each meal and care package was successfully delivered to families' homes.”

Also supporting Browne's nomination was fellow Rotarian Frank Mete who shared what he described as a “lengthy” list of her accomplishments.

“Approximately 17 years ago, Wendy took on the daunting task of putting together the Rotary beer garden at [the annual Ribfest],” he said. “For her, if we were to do this it had to be done with only local businesses and organizations. This involved arranging 35+ volunteers, getting the local hockey team, high school groups, and other service clubs out to participate for the three-day event. By having these local groups out, they too are able to raise funds and awareness for their respective groups. Unbeknownst to Wendy at the time, she managed to accomplish the biggest fundraiser of the Rotary Club for many years to come. This fundraiser allows us to support so many individuals and groups in need.

“Wendy's work does not end there; she is also involved in or has worked with such groups as the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, the Historical Society, Farmers' Market, and the Aurora Legion. She has organized or acted as a volunteer in such things as Canada Day festivities, parades, horseshoe tournament, Dance in the Park, and hosts a golf tournament in memory of her late husband, with all proceeds going back into the community.

“Wendy Browne defines what community should be. She is always willing to volunteer her time to help make Aurora a better place to live.”

A clearly moved Browne ended the ceremony with a tribute to her fellow volunteers.

“I would like to thank everyone – my family, my friends,” she said. “I am sure my parents are proud. You meet so many nice people when you volunteer, especially in the Town of Aurora and I can't tell you how much my fellow volunteers have enriched my life. I am blessed to have them all, along with my family.”

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter