

2025 Citizen of the Year Sandy Bundy is 'Optimistic' about Aurora (Updated)



Sandy Bundy was hailed for her positive attitude and 'unwavering dedication' to the Aurora community on Monday night as she was named Aurora's 2025 Citizen of the Year.

The award was bestowed by Mayor Tom Mrakas on May 26 at the Town's annual Community Recognition Awards.

The Citizen of the Year award is presented annually to one local citizen who has made 'exceptional contributions' to the community, highlighting their 'unwavering commitment, passion and dedication to their role as a volunteer in our local community.'

'Volunteers play a crucial role in creating stable communities and building connections,' said Mayor Mrakas, who served as the evening's emcee. 'They help make a meaningful impact on the lives of their neighbours and the overall community. Many of our Town programs, services and events are supported by our volunteers; without their hard work and enthusiasm, some of these events would not come to fruition.'

Before Bundy's name was revealed, the Mayor teased a few of her accomplishments while the unsuspecting recipient was seated in the audience.

'She has been an active member of the Aurora Optimist Club for more than eight years,' he said. 'She has contributed her time towards organizing mentorships, scholarships and various community events for the Optimist Club. During COVID, she was the volunteer President of the Optimist Club, and she spearheaded the KIND Program (Kids in Need Delivered), addressing specific needs of local students. Despite limited resources for this program, she successfully wrote a grant proposal to the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation, securing much-needed funds to support the KIND program. She also took the initiative to purchase the much-needed items for students such as winter boots, coats, gloves, running shoes, paper, pens, and lunch boxes. She even personally hand delivered these essentials to the schools. She also collaborated with the Aurora Food Bank and the Optimist Club on the 'Fill the Freezer' initiative to raise awareness and ensures no one goes hungry.'

Also cited were her roles as a volunteer at Hillary House National Historic Site and the Royal Canadian Legion's Aurora branch, and a mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters of York.

'Thoughtful and supportive, she takes the time to write cards or notes for friends experiencing challenging times, embodying the friend everyone needs,' the Mayor continued. 'Through her leadership, she encourages compassion, teamwork, empathy, and

understanding in her peers. Her unwavering dedication and positive attitude have profoundly impacted our community. She consistently goes above and beyond expectations, willingly taking on additional responsibilities and actively seeking ways to improve existing initiatives. Her passion for service is evident in every task she undertakes, and her leadership skills have been instrumental in creating positive change. She is not only a dedicated and willing volunteer, but she is also a loving wife and mother, and a beacon of support and inspiration for everyone around her.?

The Citizen of the Year is selected each year by a Committee organized by the Mayor's office from nominations received from members of the public.

Some of those who nominated Bundy for this year's Citizen of the Year award pointed to her tireless, quiet work behind-the-scenes.

?In essence, wherever the need, Sandy Bundy can be found,? said Rosalyn Gonsalves. ?Her sense of community, compassion and genuine desire to help improve the lives of others is to be admired.?

Optimist Club past president Georgia Pottage expressed a similar sentiment, noting, ?Sandy Bundy embodies the spirit of selflessness, compassion and community. Her impact extends far beyond the titles she holds; it resides in the smiles of children, the gratitude of families, and the stronger bonds within our Town.?

Bonnie Robertson, President of the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion, summed it up by saying, ?Everyone needs a Sandy Bundy in their lives.?

?Sandy is always the unsung hero,? said Robertson. ?She is the one in the background getting things done. You can find her in the kitchen helping with food for a friend's father's celebration of life because they needed the help. I feel very fortunate to call Sandy a friend!?

As she accepted the honour, Bundy said it was ?indeed a surprise? as she thought she was simply there to support her fellow Optimists honoured that night for their years of service, ?and all the other wonderful people who have done so much in our community.?

?We landed here about 25 years ago. We started looking [for a home] in Toronto and kept moving out and out and ended up in Aurora,? she told her fellow award recipients. ?I remember the day we were looking for our house I had an abscessed tooth, and we had been driving around the neighbourhood looking for houses. We had gone to Markham and to Richmond Hill? and we walked into the house in Aurora and I just said, ?Let's just take it! I was in such pain. The next time I came in, I remember we were driving down Wellington and went past Magna and I thought, ?What the heck is that? It was like a castle and I thought, where have we ended up?

?The last 25 years have been amazing. There have been so many wonderful opportunities and I appreciate being allowed to volunteer in so many organizations and it truly is just wonderful. I have met wonderful people there, I have had the chance to do amazing things, and I absolutely love Aurora.?

By Brock Weir