

21 local sports organizations honor Volunteers of the Year at Sport Aurora's 14th Annual Volunteer Recognition Event

Sport Aurora hosted its 14th Annual Volunteer Recognition Event at Wicked Eats on Sunday morning.

Tuxedoed emcee Stephen Forsey added a dash of elegance to the proceedings and welcomed attendees to the north end restaurant whose proprietor Rob Stewart was recognized last week by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce for Business Excellence.

Forsey thanked the amiable restaurateur for hosting this year's event and introduced Mayor Tom Mrakas. Mayor Mrakas thanked the 21 organizations for their service to the residents of Aurora, "for keeping residents healthy, active and engaged," and praised "the positive impact of volunteerism in our community."

Michael Parsa, MPP for Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, also praised the importance of community spirit and noted that "41% of Canadians volunteer their time."

He expressed his "thanks to Sport Aurora for going above and beyond in its excellent recognition of community volunteers."

MPP Dawn Gallagher-Murphy (Newmarket-Aurora) extolled the positive attitude of the volunteers present at the event "I've never heard a volunteer complain about what they do" and she thanked them for their "selflessness and giving of their time so freely."

"You are the cream of the crop."

Sport Aurora President Ron Weese thanked attendees for their hard work.

"Volunteerism is the backbone of our sports organizations," he said. "Our volunteers bring their expertise and this makes the sporting experience here in Aurora one of the best in Ontario."

Weese added that "Volunteers drive the sport. Without their contributions, sport would be too expensive for people to participate."

The President of Sport Aurora presented two distinguished and long-serving members of the sporting body with prestigious awards. The Honoured Member Award was presented to Forsey who has served as Emcee of the Volunteer Recognition Event for 14 consecutive years.

The long-time executive member of Sport Aurora reflected fondly on being "voluntold to coach 30 years ago," acknowledged humorously about being "voluntold by Laurie and Ron to work for Sport Aurora," and noted how much he enjoyed "running a men's hockey league for 20 years, and helping with the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame for 10 years." He became emotional when he thanked his father for providing him with an outstanding model of community service and noted "that this award is for you, dad."

The Sport Aurora President's Award was presented by Weese to former Aurora mayor and long-time Sport Aurora executive Geoff Dawe. Weese lauded Dawe's considerable contributions to Sport Aurora and thanked him for his active volunteer service. Dawe expressed his gratitude for the award and noted "the economic value of volunteers and their real value to sports organizations."

"My congratulations to everyone who volunteers."

Dawe's sentiments were well-received by the dozens of volunteers assembled at Wicked Eats and the celebration of selflessness rolled on as twenty-one local sports organizations presented their respective Volunteer of the Year.

The following individuals were recognized during Sunday's ceremony:

Aurora Community Tennis Club?Eric Tolles; York Region Football?Warren Craney; Central York Girls Hockey Association?Sarah Tracey; Aurora Lawn Bowling Club?Craig Lloyd; Gaunlet Road Tennis?Shelley Thunder; Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club?Stacey Barron; York Oldtimers Hockey League?David Maguire; Elevation Athletics?Greg Rank; Shaolin Martial Arts Canada?Paiten Kopenny; Aurora Skating Club?Suzanne Hoy; Toronto and North York Pony Club?Liz Miller; York Artistic Swimming Club?Sandra Gismondi; York Curling Club?Suzanne Charlebois-Bin; York North Basketball Club?Luch Condarcu and Wayne Scott; Aurora Diggers Girls Softball?Jill Green and Andy Jenicek; Aurora Junior A Hockey-- Charles Marek and John Cooper; Aurora Seniors Association?Jane Snape; KO Club Martial Arts?Kiyanna Emami and Aisuda Zandya; Storm Volleyball?Kathie Sharkey; Team Ontario Astros Baseball Club?John Stoner; Special Olympics Ontario (Aurora)?Dan Banks and Simone Hubers.

By Jim Stewart