

Aurora recognizes centuries of service at Community Recognition Awards

Volunteers, says Mayor Tom Mrakas, are 'the heart and soul' of the community and last year Aurora came together to honour nearly 400 years' worth of volunteerism.

The 2023 Community Recognition Awards honoured those who have contributed more than 20 years of volunteerism to Aurora and beyond.

'We are truly blessed to have so many giving individuals who call Aurora home,' said Mayor Mrakas. 'I am truly thankful to the volunteers for your many positive contributions to the lives of your fellow Aurorans.'

20 YEARS

John Aird, Aurora Soccer Club

Aird was hailed for his work as a coach, executive and leader within the organization and someone who has been 'instrumental' in growing the beautiful game within Aurora's borders.

'He has been involved in youth programs and has supported all levels of soccer from beginner recreational level through to the highest competitive level for men's and women's teams,' read his citation. 'He has worked tirelessly in promoting and supporting adult soccer in the community [and] his continuous drive and passion is appreciated by so many.'

Doug Kilpatrick, CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors)

'Doug has been volunteering with CHATS since January of 2001. Starting with the CHATS Transportation program, Doug provided essential transportation services to older adults. From medical appointments to grocery shopping to personal errands, even social outings, Doug was there to provide safe transportation and welcoming conversation to seniors in need. In September 2020, Doug began volunteering with the Meals on Wheels Program where he delivers frozen meals on a weekly basis to CHATS clients providing them with a nutritious meal and a safety check. Throughout COVID this service helped provide reassurance to families and individuals, knowing they had somebody like Doug checking in on them and their loved ones.'

Anna Kroeplin, Optimist Club of Aurora

'Anna has been a member of several committees within the Optimist Club of Aurora. She has served on the Board of Directors, is a Past President of the Club and has participated actively in many events and aspects of the club. She has been continuously involved in the annual chess tournament, the Aurora Home Show Pub and Grill, and the Club's mobile kitchen. The Optimist Club of Aurora is grateful for Anna's involvement and dedication.'

Frank Mete, Rotary Club of Aurora

'Frank can be described by his fellow Rotarians as a go-to guy and he is always willing to give a hand and help problem solve. There have been a couple of presidents that had to leave during their turn and Frank always stepped into finish the term. 'duration or tear down and always with a smile. The Rotary Club is so grateful for Frank's enthusiasm and can-do attitude.'

Sandy Townsend, Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club

'Sandy started as a coach with the Aurora Barbarians in 2002 and has held many roles over the years. He has coached every level within the club, teaching many young athletes the proper skill and technique of the game of Rugby. He was the Past director of the Junior Boys Rugby Program from 2003-2014 and is currently the World Rugby Coach Educator, where he mentors the club's

coaches. Sandy is an integral part of the Aurora Barbarians Rugby Club for the past 20 years; he is a hardworking and passionate coach that the club is lucky to have.?

Janice Walsh, Optimist Club of Aurora

?Janice has been an active member of the Optimist Club of Aurora for over 20 years, and has served the youth of our Town in many ways. She has been a member of many committees, served on the Board of Directors, is a Past Secretary of the Club and has been involved in various events. Most notably she has been a part of the annual financial review, the Aurora Home Show Pub and Grill, book sales at the Farmers' Market and has been involved with the club's Mobile Kitchen. The Optimist Club of Aurora appreciates the hard work and commitment that Janice has devoted to the club over the past 20 years.?

25 YEARS

Joe Bentolila, Aurora Minor Hockey Association

?Joe Bentolila has volunteered with the Aurora Minor Hockey Association for the past 25 years as a team manager, trainer, Board Member and now as current President. Joe is the epitome of a true leader and volunteer who strives to continuously improve and learn, in order to grow the sport of hockey in Aurora. Over the past 25 years, Joe has put in a tremendous amount of work behind the scenes; he has sacrificed time away from work, family and friends and continues to do so with a huge smile on his face. Joe is the kind of person who has an infectious personality; he truly is one-of-a-kind. The Aurora Minor Hockey association is extremely grateful for the work ethic Joe continuously displays and the unparalleled impact he has had on players, coaches, parents, and the game of hockey in Aurora.?

Pat McMurray, Aurora Youth Soccer Club

??Coach Pat' has been involved in coaching, mentoring, teaching, promoting and instilling passion for the beautiful game of soccer to hundreds of young players within the community for the past 25 years. Pat has also played an integral part of Aurora Youth Soccer Club's Stingers Stars program for kids with special needs. His involvement in this program has enabled countless kids and youth with special needs to learn, play, build confidence, enhance social connections, develop personally and, most importantly, have fun.?

Roy Cohen, Aurora Youth Soccer Club

?Roy is a special individual who has shared his passion for sports and recreation with the youth of our Town, through his extensive and tireless volunteer involvement over the past 25 years. Since 1998, Roy has served as a volunteer soccer coach with Aurora Youth Soccer Club, where he has also held the position as a board member for the last 13 years. He has held the positions of President for 6 years, recreational coach for multiple teams and ages as well as a coach for the competitive program. He has also devoted time to mentoring youth soccer players, supporting the Stinger Stars program for kids with special needs and has won multiple Volunteer Coaching Awards from the Aurora Youth Soccer Club. Roy has been unselfishly giving his time and support to the community for well over 25 years and continues to help young people reach their potential through their involvement in sport and recreation.?

Helene Selemidis-Hill, Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society (Garden Aurora)

?Helene has been an engaged and committed member of the Aurora Garden and Horticultural Society for 25 years, where she has held the position of Second Vice-President for five years. Helene contributes to many activities of the Aurora Garden Horticultural Society. She is a qualified judge for Floral Design, Horticulture, and Roses, an extraordinary floral designer herself and she is always keen to represent the society when the opportunity presents itself. She is always willing to support in all areas necessary.?

Brian Walsh, Optimist Club of Aurora

?Walsh has been a member of several committees within of the Optimist Club of Aurora in his 25 years of volunteering. He has served on the Board of Directors, is a Past President of the Club, and has participated in many activities, events and aspects of the club. He has shown tremendous work ethic and support with Christmas Cake fundraising, the Aurora Home Show Pub and Grill, the Santa Claus Parade Marshaling, the Minor Hockey Showcase and many others. The Optimist Club of Aurora is grateful to have Brian as a member.?

30 YEARS

Tony Anderson, Rotary Club of Aurora

?Tony has held many positions within the club such as Treasurer and President. His Rotarian members have described him as a 'solid as a rock' kind of guy. Some of his work is based internationally and he has still been dedicated to the Rotary Club. Tony is a very kind and level-headed individual, whose embodies the values of a true Rotary Club member.?

Margaret Thiffault, Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society

?Margaret has been a member of the Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society for the past 30 years where she held the position of Membership Director on the Board of Directors for eight years. She continuously volunteers for events such as the plant sale and garden tour whenever needed; she is always available to lend a helping hand. She also takes initiative with fundraising, making cards of her photographs to sell, as well as donating plants from her garden for the club to sell at the plant sale. She has been a consistent member over the past 30 years and supports the objective to beautify Aurora.?

35 YEARS

Shirley Binns, Aurora Garden and Horticultural Society

?Shirley has been a dedicated member of the Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society for the past 35 years where she has held many positions on the Board of Directors. She is an exceptional floral designer who spreads her vast horticultural knowledge through teaching, mentoring, and encouraging other members daily. Shirley is a qualified judge, competes in floral exhibitions and creates the flower show schedule. She is always willing to volunteer and participate in outreach projects to help beautify Aurora and the community.?

40 YEARS

Vic Priestly, Rotary Club of Aurora

?Vic is solid Rotarian who has, hosted many parties for the club, and who personally ran the ham fundraiser from start to finish. Those that know him, know he is extremely, funny, with a great sense of humour which keeps, times with the Club always fun. In a nutshell Vic is just a kind and caring person.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter