

Canada 150 medals honour community's unsung heroes



By Brock Weir

They are fuelled by a passion for community, but they often put this passion in action quietly and with little fanfare. That all changed this fall, however, when Newmarket-Aurora MP Kyle Peterson honoured 150 residents of the riding with a special medal to mark a very special occasion.

The best and brightest volunteers from Newmarket-Aurora filled Northridge Community Church as one member of the community for each of Canada's 150 years was recognized for their 'unsung' heroism.

Whether they have worked behind the scenes as advocates for food security, seniors, or LGBTQ rights, each of the 150 individuals were, after a call for nominations was put out this past summer, nominated by members of the community at large for their 'outstanding volunteer service and dedication to the community.'

'We wanted people who contribute to the community on a regular basis and just help make Newmarket-Aurora a better place to live through their own volunteer efforts,' says Mr. Peterson looking back on the ceremony. 'What struck me was the number of people I hadn't heard of, the unsung heroes who were nominated. It was great to learn about so many organizations and great people in the community that a lot of people don't even know are around and all the great work people are doing.'

What struck Mr. Peterson about each of the recipients, he says, was a common refrain when he presented them with the medals themselves. More often than not they said, 'I can't believe I was nominated' or 'I don't even know why [my name] was put forward.'

'It was just the humility of people who were nominated; it just becomes such a routine and part of their daily life - their volunteer efforts, whether it was the hospital or a non-profit, or with sports teams or youth organizations, they didn't see themselves as anything special. It was just such a normal part of their daily lives they didn't realise someone else would see them as playing such an important role in our community,' he says. 'To be honest, that overwhelmed me at some points. These are the people who make our community such a great place to live.'

These people were, in alphabetical order:

Jim Abram
Susan Abram
Elaine Adam
Naqi Ashan
Jim Alexander
Alex Ansell
Ken Antaya
Tyler Barker
Dorian Baxter
Jacque Bayley
Melanie Bell
Martha Berry
Jean-Paul Bichay
Elizabeth Blight

Tom Boswell
Kirk Bowden
Phyllis Brady
Laurie Braekboer
Marjorie Brewster
Judy Brunton
Rod Bruton
Nancy Cameron
Lynda Carusi
Erin Cerenzia
Bill Chadwick
Tracee Chambers
Don Chretien
Rob Clark
Michelle Clayton Wood
Julie Cochrane
Linda Condy
Tom Connor
Crystal Cook
Judy Craig
Jennifer Cuypers
Rosemarie D'Aguiar
Claire D'Aurore
Karey Dawe
John Dowson
Angel Dupee
Chris Dupee
Paul Dutton
Lily Edmunds
Chris Emanuel
Carrie Emerson
Leslie Everson
Jacqueline FainGold
Robert Fairs
Bonnie Fleishaker
Roy George
Rosalyn Gonsalves
Kerry Greico
Matt Haggerty
David Hanna
Dave Hanson
John Hardy
Roy Harrison
Athol Hart
Beth Hart
Patricia Hawke
Elisabeth Hempen
Steve Hinder
James Hoyes
Lori Hoyes

Maureen Huismans
Rob Hums
Jacqueline Hunt
Wasim Jarrah
Paul Jones
Jill Kellie
Erika Kerwin
Chan Khamphoommee
Greg Knuth
Danielle Koren
Teresa Kruze
Alda Lima
Reggie Lima
John Loughry
Rich Lunney
Janis Luttrell
Richard MacLeod
Glenn Marais
Donelda Martin
Gary Marston
Graeme Mason
Don McCallum
Eric McCartney
Sandra McCleary
Don McKnight
Steve McNaught
Glen McRobbie
Juliane McTavish-Goyette
Peter Miller
Kevin Mills
Adam Mobbs
Melanie Moffat
Trudy Montgomery
Jacob Montgomery
Jim Nesbitt
James Nuttall
Brian Patterson
Tom Pearson
Tara Peel
Judy Perry
Rohan Persaud
Glenn Playter
Jackie Playter
Juliana Playter
Wes Playter
Susan Popper
Rick Preston
Keith Profit
John Rank
Tammy Raper

Joyce Remy
Karen Richards
David Robinson
Richard Roos
Al Rover
Marilyn Savage
Doug Scott
Alejandro Segura
Lea Seymour
Melissa Shafa
Terry Sherin
Gina Shillolo
Ranji Singh
Marcia Sinclair
Dean Smalley
Michael Smith
Marilyn Sorochan
Elizabeth Sparling
Joe Sponga
Mike Springford
Sean Stephens
Barry Stock
Fred Stoneman
Peter Sturup
Murray Taylor
Tom Taylor
Karin Theron
Lena Thorogood
Roxanne Van Bynen
Chole Vargas
Bessie Vlasis
Gail Waller
David Wattling
Dave Williams
Frank Young
Claudius Zujew

“I hope the people of Newmarket-Aurora realise how fortunate we are to live in a community where there are so many people who make giving back part of their daily routine and making giving back part of their lives,” says Mr. Peterson. “I have two young children who are very active in sports and they have great coaches and great organizations that are all volunteers and we're very blessed and fortunate.

“We live in the greatest community in Canada, or one of the greatest communities in Canada, and a big part of that is the quality of the volunteers and the quantity of volunteers we have.”

Looking back over the Canada 150 commemorations in 2017, Mr. Peterson says the observances, from the Canada Day bash to Aurora's inaugural Pow-Wow served to show “how far Canada, as a country, has come in 150 years and how much further we still have to go and what we can do.”

“Every Canadian should be proud to be Canadian and proud to be part of a country like Canada and accept the fact we have accomplished a lot but we are just beginning,” says Mr. Peterson. “There is much more to do and many more ways to ensure Canada remains a progressive nation, a beacon to many in the world on how to get certain things right. I just think it was a great year for Canada to rally around the maple leaf and keep working hard to make the country better.”