

Citizen of the Year's passion for giving back was instilled at young age



Giving back is not something new for Sandy Bundy; in fact, it's always been a way of life.

The long-time community volunteer, whose work ranges from the Optimist Club of Aurora, to Hillary House National Historic Site, to Big Brothers Big Sisters of York and the Royal Canadian Legion, was named Aurora's 2025 Citizen of the Year at the Town of Aurora's annual Community Recognition Awards on May 26.

Speaking to *The Auran* after she had a week to try her new title on for size, she said she was thoroughly surprised to receive the honour as she thought she was just at the ceremony to celebrate her fellow volunteers, including a number of Optimists who were being honoured for decades of service.

"I just really enjoyed being there, seeing that, and the other awards, and I was just so happy they got acknowledged because it just makes you aware of what's going on in the Town and the people who are doing their best to bring the best," says Bundy. "I was not expecting the award at all, but once the Mayor started reading [the citation] I started to think it sounded a little familiar. I don't know what I was thinking at the time, but it was definitely a surprise."

Bundy says she grew up in a family where volunteering was a part of everyday life.

Her parents were ardent volunteers, with her mother serving as the president of the volunteer organization that served the Children's Psychiatric Research Institute in London, ON.

"When she needed help with things, we would come out and help," she says of her family. "Right away I was able to see people who weren't as fortunate as myself, who had mental and physical disabilities, or had come from terrible homes, and I think that's where helping those that need help, that don't have everything that I've been fortunate to have, [came from] and realizing there's so many people out there that need us to help them."

These early experiences gave her a working knowledge of real-world struggles and the ways, large and small, the average person can help.

"My heart as a volunteer is for helping those who are less fortunate," she says, "but there are also other areas I am interested in. When I work at the Legion and Hillary House, those aren't people in need, but it is very different. My heart is in the programs that I run through the Optimist Club - the KIND (Kids in Need Delivered) program, which is helping youth in our area. I really like to

grow the programs I am running now through the Optimist Club because they are helping kids in need [and] we're now just realizing the need at high schools and are creating a program there.?

As she considers the impact of the Citizen of the Year Award, Bundy says it's an honour to have the opportunity of representing Aurora's volunteers in the community over the next 12 months and highlighting the benefits of giving back.

?It's so easy to get involved in so many different things,? she says. ?There's so much out there, but I didn't really realize that people kind of just don't know where to start. Everybody has something to offer, whether you're a leader, a follower, a worker bee, you can take part in whatever you feel most comfortable. Maybe someone likes working with animals, so they can volunteer with animals. Maybe for some people, working with animals is their job, so they're looking for something totally different. There's really something for everybody and there's no job that is too small.

?People can get involved at any sort of level and work, do as much as they want, and for some organizations, there's not a big need for what they do, but it's such a wonderful way to meet people, to find out about maybe an area that you don't know about, or to share your expertise in an area. There really, truly is something for everybody out there. Don't worry, just jump in, find out more about it, and go from there. It's great developing friendships. For people still in the job market, it's great for your resume; for the younger kids getting community hours as well, there are so many opportunities out there.?

By Brock Weir