

Community Recognition: Barker honoured as accessibility difference-maker



By Brock Weir

Tyler Barker is not resting on his laurels – there's still much more work to be done.

That was the message Mr. Barker delivered earlier this year as he accepted the Town of Aurora's 2018 Inclusivity Award, part of the Community Recognition Awards' program.

Mr. Barker was recognized by the Town for his contributions not only as chair of Aurora's Accessibility Advisory Committee, but also for his advocacy work well beyond Town limits, including his vocal promotion of a new fully accessible washroom trailer is becoming a familiar sight at many large-scale York Region events.

"The inclusivity award is presented to an individual, group or business which has contributed to making the Town of Aurora a more accessible and inclusive place to live, work and play for all people," said event emcee Brian North, reading Mr. Barker's citation.

"Tyler Barker is a pillar of our community for his incredible work focusing on accessibility. Tyler has been the chair of the Accessibility Committee for four years and has moved the town's AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) objectives to completion and beyond. As the Chair of the Town of Aurora Accessibility committee, Tyler's passion to ensure inclusivity is at the forefront of all aspects of our Town, reviewing buildings, parks, parking requirements and much more, which will continue to allow all individuals in Aurora the freedom to live their lives to the fullest.

"For instance, Tyler was instrumental in identifying the needs for ramps with older buildings. His efforts aren't just focused on Aurora, as they also consulted with Upper Canada Mall to have them create a barrier free accessible washroom. Additionally, Tyler advocated for a fully accessible portable washroom trailer which could operate at special events. This was the first of its kind and was displayed at the 2017 Invictus Games. This trailer will now be shared with the York Region Festivals and other community events. The positive impact Tyler makes through his advocacy is endless."

While the impact of Mr. Barker's advocacy might be endless, so is his to-do list.

"Thank you very much, but I would like to point out a fundamental fact: it takes more than one reason to keep true accessibility in the community," said Mr. Barker, thanking his fellow Committee members, particularly Gordon Barnes and Jo-ann Spitzer, for their work, as well as the support of Councillors Wendy Gaertner and Sandra Humfryes, and then-Deputy Mayor John Abel. "Last, but not least, [I would like to thank] my mother, Patrice Barker. She allowed me to come up with my own ideas to make true accessibility a reality.

"I am passionate as I understand the challenges I and many others face on a daily basis. There are many things that still need to be accomplished. In Ontario, transportation has to be truly accessible. Transportation is a fundamental right for every Ontarian. Let's work together to make this happen. Lastly, before communities undertake projects, reach out to the disabled community because true accessibility benefits all. Thank you very much."