

Green Award honours local resident ahead of the game on single use plastics, stewardship



As Canada phases out single use plastic bags this week, Aurora has had a bit of a head start thanks to Lissa Dwyer.

An environmental advocate, Dwyer is a long-time advocate for eliminating the use of single use plastics and was recognized this past spring for her wide-ranging volunteer work by the Town of Aurora with the 2022 Green Award, part of the Community Recognition Awards program.

The Green Award is presented each year to an individual or organization that supports the protection, preservation, sustainability or conservation of our natural environment, celebrating those who 'share the Town's commitment to creating a greener community.'

As a volunteer with the Aurora Community Arboretum, evidence of Dwyer's green credentials can be found in a green vein that flows literally through the heart of Aurora.

'Improving our natural environment takes a lot of hard work, knowledge, and sheer dedication, which Lissa has an abundance of,' said Neighbourhood Network manager Erin Cerenzia, who emceed this year's awards ceremony at Town Hall. 'Lissa has dedicated more than 10 years [coordinating] the Nest Box Monitoring Program for Nature Aurora. She recruits and trains volunteers to monitor hundreds of nest boxes and to maintain them while collecting research and data. The purpose of this study is to monitor the health of four different bird species' populations locally here in Aurora. This study shows how many eggs are laid each year and how many hatchlings survive, enabling appropriate strategies to be developed to help birds flourish in Aurora, which also contributes positively to the local ecosystem.

'To further help the birds, last year Lissa coordinated the planting of hundreds of small trees in the David Tomlinson Nature Reserve. These trees will act as a buffer from nearby houses, allowing for birds and wildlife to feel more at home. Lissa also gives back in a variety of roles at the Aurora Community Arboretum where she has spent countless hours planting the beautiful daffodil bulbs and trees, weeding in the nursery, mulching trees, and picking up garbage. She is also a dedicated volunteer for the Oak Ridges Trail Association and is working hard to rid the world of one-time-use plastics. All of her efforts have contributed to keeping the Arboretum and Aurora a beautiful place and contributing positively to our Town's ecosystem.'

Accepting the award, Dwyer said it was a recognition of not just her work but 'the efforts made by my friends' intended to make Aurora better in the long run for everyone.'

?The Arboretum's efforts have enhanced a beautiful area, but the real benefit will be in the future when the climate has changed,? said Dwyer. ?I delight in spending my free time with folks who love to get their hands dirty and play in the weeds, plant, mulch, so we can all enjoy something beautiful. I am really proud of what's been accomplished when I hear that everyone has just discovered the daffodil field, a memorial bench or a trail.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter