

Outgoing Regional Chair honoured by Community Living Newmarket-Aurora



By Jeff Doner

After more than 20 years of working in the public sector, York Region Chairman and CEO Bill Fisch was honoured by Community Living Newmarket-Aurora as the recipient of the 2014 Community Service Award.

With his recent retirement announcement, Fisch told a room full of friends, colleagues and community members gathered at Copper Creek Golf Club that the award was the icing on the cake.

"It really is an honour for me to be here," he said. "I have done as much as I possibly could over the last 25 years to improve the lives of everyone, but truthfully, Community Living and the folks who are part of that, and the folks who need our help, and the folks who would otherwise fall through the cracks," he said. "They're the ones that we on Council and you have helped and I can tell you that you all should feel very good about what we've done, not only tonight, but in many other times around this region to ensure that everyone, regardless of their race, colour, their intellectual abilities, has an opportunity.

"That is what we're here for and that is what I am here for and I want to thank all of you."

The Community Service Award has been presented annually to an individual who exemplifies excellence in community service.

Over the years, Fisch has taken an active role in supporting various community groups and charities and most recently was instrumental in bringing last summer's Special Olympics to York Region as the event's co-chair.

He has worked with the United Way, the Children's Safety Village of York Region, and York Region Abuse Program. He was nominated for the award by York Regional Police Chief Eric Jolliffe.

"I'm very proud of what we've accomplished, I have some pride in what I've accomplished and let me tell you, I could not have done anything without people like yourselves to make it happen. I am very humbled and honoured to think that I have made a positive impact."

The Tribute Dinner is the major annual fundraiser for Community Living, which is a non-profit charitable organization.

For over 60 years, Community Living has provided support for people and serves about 300 people each year in Newmarket and Aurora.

?What we do every year is all the funds that are raised here go directly to support people with intellectual disabilities,? said Community Living Newmarket ? Aurora executive director, Colleen Zakoor. ?Our mission is about inclusion, it's about building a community where everybody belongs.?

Zakoor praised Fisch for his work in the community and said the event brings an important amount of attention to the issue and the importance of such services in the community.

?For 60 years this organization has worked in housing, providing support for people who want to get back into the workforce and get some training,? she said. ?There's a variety of programs, but the biggest part is the dollars raised are directed to people.?

As for Fisch, he said the event marked the beginning of somewhat of a farewell tour before his retirement.

?It's really an honour to be a recipient of the community service award and I have received a couple of awards over the last number of years, but I can tell you that this award does hold a real special place in my heart.?