

Restaurant recognizes Peter Miller's 50 years of mentorship at McDonald's



Over 200 dignitaries, colleagues, associates, friends, and family members attended long-time restaurateur Peter Miller's recognition party at McDonald's in King City last week.

The reception celebrated Miller's 50 years of mentorship, as well as his generous support of charitable organizations across York Region and the GTA for over five decades.

Miller ??originally from Sydney, NS ??opened his first McDonald's in Richmond Hill over 35 years ago and currently owns 15 McDonald's restaurants in York Region and one in North York. There are over 1,400 McDonald's restaurants in Canada, the first of which opened in Richmond, BC in 1967.

Miller glided effortlessly between various groups of attendees ??most of whom were clearly influenced by the veteran restaurateur and travelled from as far as Timmins to attend the celebration.

The party peaked at 5 p.m. after much congenial corporate kibitzing when Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen presented Miller with a congratulatory certificate ?commemorating his 50th Anniversary at McDonald's.?

Van Bynen applauded Miller's 50-year connection to York Region's charitable agencies and sports organizations and thanked him for his ?important contributions to community including the hospital, the minor hockey teams, the baseball teams, the soccer teams ??all of which are better due to your support.?

Van Bynen also championed Miller's ?leadership, community spirit, and care for so many charitable agencies in York Region.?

Miller opened a McDonald's restaurant in Newmarket when the Town's population was only 8,000 and has cared for the communities in which he has run his businesses. Over the last half-a-century, he has been an ardent supporter of the Newmarket Minor Hockey Association, especially its annual House League tournament; the Aurora Youth Soccer Club; the Central York Girls Hockey Association; the Newmarket Hawks Baseball Club; Newmarket Redbirds Lacrosse; and the Oak Ridges and Richmond Hill Soccer Clubs.

In addition to promoting youth sports, Miller has contributed mightily to Community Living, Doane House Hospice, Kerry's Place Autism Services, Newmarket Santa Claus Parade, Salvation Army, Southlake Regional Health Centre, Yellow Brick House, York

Central Hospital Association, and York Region Children's Aid Society.

Miller reflected fondly on his time served on hospital boards and foundations and the satisfaction of helping local families for over 40 years through the Ronald McDonald House Charities.

The McDonald's mentor was clearly taken by the moment, especially as he immersed himself in warm conversations with former colleagues who thanked him for his positive influence on their lives.

"I cried lots of tears of joy this afternoon. All the great memories of working with so many of these people over the years."

Miller's eyes welled up as he described the best part of the afternoon's festivities: "I feel that I've helped people along the way --that would be the most satisfying part of today --to see people doing so well."

The dynamic and magnanimous nature of Miller was evident in his demonstrable impact on the dozens of employees who passed through the reception. The recognition of his years of steering careers and service to so many agencies was fitting and Miller soaked in the adulation much as a master teacher experiences the joy of meeting former students who have excelled in their chosen vocation and offer thanks years after the fact for the timely mentorship they received in and out of the classroom.

It was evident from the interactions at the reception that Miller has lived his life in these moments much as Cesare Pavese suggested we do when he said famously "We do not remember days --we remember moments."

Peter Miller was re-living his remarkable life and its moments at Wednesday's reception.

It seemed like a pleasant trip down memory lane for the veteran fifty-year McDonald's leader.

Miller mentioned that he "felt blessed to be a part of so many lives" and described "the wonderful feeling when I meet people again after many years."

Miller described the best part of working at McDonald's for 50 years.

"To see people grow up --to see them promoted into management and have successful lives."

He focused on the importance of mentoring young employees.

"There is so much satisfaction in helping a shy 15-16-year-old become a confident person with great communication skills and to give them the means to make their life better. It was satisfying to see the potential in so many young people and give them opportunities to realize that potential."

Miller also shared that the "exciting part of management is teaching people --to provide them with a more secure financial future, how to run a business, and to help people who have struggled financially to get a good footing and start in adult life."

He expressed much satisfaction in teaching prospective McDonald's managers about the importance of "discipline, hard work, and getting into the restaurant at 6 a.m. on weekends to serve the customers of the day, but also how to touch the lives of people in a positive manner."

Wednesday's reception in King City demonstrated that Peter Miller has touched the lives of so many people in a positive manner. The accolades and anecdotes delivered by McDonald's managers, MP Tony Van Bynen, business partners, and his daughter, Jennifer, and wife, Rochelle, reflected the warmth that Miller has radiated in his five decades as a philanthropic restaurateur who has mentored thousands and made York Region communities better places to live.

By Jim Stewart