

Restaurateur Sam Saberi is Aurora's 2022 Citizen of the Year



Sam Saberi's meals have tickled the tastebuds of countless residents of Aurora and beyond as the man behind Tina's Grill, a popular restaurant on McClellan Way at Bathurst.

But, when he's not in the kitchen or serving up copious stacks of chicken wings, he works tirelessly behind the scenes with little recognition to make Aurora a better place.

That all changed on Monday night, however, when Mr. Saberi was named Aurora's 2022 Citizen of the Year.

The Town's top honour was presented by Mayor Tom Mrakas in Council Chambers at this year's Community Recognition Awards, held in person this year for the first time since the start of the global pandemic.

It was a doubly special evening for Mr. Saberi who, in addition to Citizen of the Year, also saw Tina's Grill share Aurora's Good Business Award with fellow restaurant Topper's Pizza.

With Mr. Saberi's big win still under wraps, Mayor Mrakas teased the audience with a few details about his community-building contributions before the big reveal.

"The Citizen of the Year award has been awarded by the Town to many devoted volunteers since 1970," he said. "The Citizen of the Year award exemplifies an individual's commitment, passion, and perseverance to their role of being a volunteer in our local community". Tonight we recognize a volunteer who has an unwavering love for Aurora and is a strong advocate for our local businesses. This volunteer has been an Aurora resident for 23 years and has a long history of running restaurants in York Region.

"He is invested in giving back to our community. He provided support to a local family that lost their house to a fire. He used his business as a drop-off location for Christmas toy donations after toys were stolen from the local fire station. He detailed his personal journey of contracting COVID-19 to give others inspiration about the benefits of vaccines and how it saved his life. Without hesitation, he selflessly helped a driver who had suffered a medical condition and lost control of his vehicle. With the help of others in the community, he was able to help the driver out of the vehicle and to safety.

"He has reached out to his patrons to generously collect donations for the people of Ukraine, running an incredible and very successful collection campaign. Many customers and friends have credited him as being a genuine and caring person who has an incredible sense of community."

It was at this point that this year's Citizen of the Year was revealed to an enthusiastic audience of friends, patrons, fellow award-recipients and community members at large.

As the applause died down, Mayor Mrakas heralded Mr. Saberi's "compassion, commitment and unwavering love for Aurora, our business community, and residents," which he said was inspiring.

"His upbeat personality and continuous efforts to improve the lives of others have made a positive impact on our community. Sam has a multitude of strong supporters who say that he always sees the good in others and he embodies the spirit of kindness in our Town. Thank you, Sam, for generously giving your time to Aurora and making our community a better place to live in. You are a dedicated business owner running a successful business, Tina's Grill that we all truly love. As we emerge from the pandemic, your work serves to remind us of all the support we can lend each other. By staying positive and setting a good example for your peers, you inspire your customers, our local residents, businesses and your friends to give back to our community and to do better."

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter