

Shine a light on your local heroes as deadline for Community Recognition Awards approaches

Your everyday heroes don't wear capes, but when they spring into action, they're not seeking glory, they're just happy to help.

But, a little bit of glory can go a long way as the Town prepares to celebrate heroes of all kinds this spring as part of the Community Recognition Awards.

Held each year to honour residents in a variety of areas, community members have until this Friday, March 31, to get their nominations in.

This year's categories include:

- Volunteer Service Award ? Honouring individuals with 5, 10, 15, or more years of community service. - Youth Volunteer Award ? Awarded to youth up to the age of 19 who ?have made a significant contribution to the community? while demonstrating their commitment to ?being a positive leader today and in the future.? - Senior Volunteer Award ? Presented to a senior 55+ who has ?made a significant contribution to the community? while demonstrating their commitment to ?being a positive leader today and in the future.? - Green Award ? To an individual, business or community organization that ?support the protection, preservation, sustainability, or conservation of our natural environment, celebrating those who share the Town's commitment to a greener community.? - Arts & Culture Award ? An individual or group who has ?enhanced our community through their support or promotion of arts and culture, including music, visual, performing, or the literary arts.? - Community Leadership Award ? Presented to an individual, business or community organization that has enhanced Aurora ?through their contribution, commitment and leadership in areas of charitable giving, civic engagement, community events or community spirit.? - Good Neighbour Award ? To an individual who ?embodies what it means to be a good neighbour,? recognizing and celebrating ?the simple acts of kindness and compassion that help create connected and vibrant neighbourhoods.? - Good Business Award ? Presented to a local business that has demonstrated ?its commitment to assisting Aurora's economic prosperity, corporate responsibility, and community involvement through its ongoing support of charitable causes, events or programs.? - Inclusivity Award ? To an individual, group or business ?which has contributed to making Aurora a more accessible and/or inclusive place to live, work and play for all people regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or disability.? - Community Safety Award ? To an individual or organization dedicated to ?the development, promotion or support of initiatives that improve community safety,? recognizing how ?safer communities only happen when individuals take action to make a difference.? - Citizen of the Year ? Recognizing exceptional contributions made by a local citizen to our community.? Eligible nominees must be a citizen of Aurora aged 16+, excluding members of Council or Town Employees; successful nominations must be accompanied by at least one letter of no more than two pages detailing the nominee's activities; and special consideration may be given to nominees younger than 16.?

?Aurora truly is a special community and it is made up of community members that give their time, give their talent, and give their hearts, and it's evident with how beautiful you see the Town, how robust it is, how there is so much activity going on ? and it really stems from our core of volunteers,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, on what struck her about last year's nominees and winners. ?The Community Recognition Awards (CRA) is really a program from the community for the community. Having said that, we're really dependent on the community to take a few minutes, consider some nominations. We try to make the process seamless and as easy as possible to share with us who others have recognized as difference-makers.

?Whether you're fortunate enough to have a great neighbour who is constantly doing nice things just to make life that little bit easier, whether you know a youth who just stands out and is showing so much promise for the future they hold for us, whether it is a senior that you have seen give back their time and talents, or even if it is a good business ? if you have seen how they contributed back to

the community, put their names forward.?

Some categories, she adds, honour ?really silent heroes,? those whose work is sometimes less noticed or underappreciated.

The Community Safety Award, for instance, has a broad scope and can include people with ideas, innovations and concept that have improved community safety. The Green Award has many different angles as well, she says.

?I think there are so many green initiatives out there and I think those who are doing all the hard work are doing it with boots on the ground and if people aren't seeing it, we're all benefiting from their green improvements,? says Ms. Ware. ?For our youth category, it is the youth who are carrying us forward and it would be really nice to recognize all those who show those extra-special qualities because even being nominated for an award like this can really motivate them to spread their wings into doing more.

?There is so much heart and soul in this community that it's time to share it. Submit those nominations; Everyone who is nominated, regardless of the income, will receive a letter of acknowledgement noting that the differences they make do matter and do make a difference. Again, this is a program from the community for the community so please take a few minutes, consider if they have someone, an organization, person, or group to nominate. Take a few minutes, send it in, because it really does matter. We fully know volunteers don't do what they do to get recognized, but when they are recognized it really matters.?

For more information on the Community Recognition Awards, including criteria and nomination forms, visit aurora.ca/cra.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter