

Simple good deeds can go a long way, says Senior Volunteer Award honouree



From an early age, Jackie Catto was taught that if you have the time to be of help to others, you should do so.

It's a lesson that's stuck with her through to the present day, and it's a philosophy that has helped her make a real difference in the community she calls home.

This past spring, Catto was honoured by the Town of Aurora with their 2022 Senior Volunteer Award, part of the Town's Community Recognition Awards program.

The Senior Volunteer Award is presented each year to a resident aged 55+ who, "through their volunteer efforts, has made a significant contribution to the community" and has "demonstrated their commitment to being a positive leader today and into the future."

"It's quite rare in life that you meet someone who gives back and shows kindness to others because that's just who they are," said Neighbourhood Network Manager Erin Cerenzia, who emceed the 2022 Community Recognition Awards ceremony at Town Hall. "Their volunteerism seems to be innate rather than something that is learned or something that they're told to do. Jackie falls into this category. When you receive a caring card from Jackie, you know how heartfelt it is and it can help soothe even those who are suffering the most.

"I am going to highlight just a few of Jackie's volunteer experiences over the last decades. She started the Kettleby Co-Op Nursery School, which is still operating 50 years later; she was president of the Victorian Order of Nursing - York Region and was on the Board for many years. She sold daffodils for the Cancer Society and regularly visited shut-ins in nursing homes and hospital settings.

"Jackie has a 42-year association with the Aurora United Church, where she oversaw 145 volunteers leading all of the youth educational programming initiatives. As her nominators say, "To know Jackie is to love her. She is always cheery and positive and she continues to spread good will, love and warmth to the Aurora community."

Accepting the award, Catto said she was doing so on behalf of "all those who do wonderful things."

"Doing something for others has always been a part of who I am and promoted I guess by Brownies and Guides, and in Sunday School and various groups who instilled that thought that one can be of help to others, and that's a good thing," she shared. "I do quite a bit of that through the church aspect, which is visiting seniors in the long-term care facilities; however, that has been curtailed because of the COVID situations, but we have been sending notes and we deliver poinsettias at Christmastime and do as much as we can from the external aspect of things.

?I certainly do things for my neighbours and friends and all the rest of it, just little things ? goodies on their doorsteps or whatever you can think of to do. It's been a time this past couple of years for all of us, especially those of us who live alone. I am extremely pleased and very grateful and very humbled by it because I know there are so, so many able people who do very, very rewarding things in the community.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter