

Tireless volunteers honoured at Community Recognition Awards

The last 15 months of the global pandemic has underscored the importance of volunteers stepping up to lend a helping hand.

They have volunteered with seniors to ensure bodies and minds stay active, used their creative talents to benefit community organizations, and even put in the hours to help critters safely cross the road.

On Monday night, they were honoured as community builders at Aurora's 2021 Community Recognition Awards.

Held virtually for the second year in Aurora, the ceremony was streamed online and hosted by Mayor Tom Mrakas, who paid tribute to the value volunteers bring to the community.

"This past year has no doubt been tough," he said. "The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every single one of us, but it has also been a year where community members have come together to provide support, kindness and much-needed help to everyone. This year has been a long year requiring a lot of stamina and resilience, which Aurorans have demonstrated daily.

"Volunteers, through their dedication, creativity, kind hearts and passion have created a model for others to follow. Our volunteers ensure that we can take care of each other and still be able to look forward with hope that Aurora with its small-town charm will continue to be strong and innovative as we work together building our beautiful future."

Individual awards were handed out for senior volunteerism, environmentalism (Green Award), contributions to arts and culture, community leadership, for being a good neighbour, improving community safety, for being models of good business, and, in the case of Max Le Moine, putting himself forward as a youth volunteer.

YOUTH VOLUNTEER AWARD ? MAX LE MOINE

Le Moine is this year's recipient of the Youth Volunteer Award, an honour presented to citizens up to the age of 18 who have made significant contributions to their community and serve as a positive leader.

"Max is an extraordinary young person who understands the value of giving back to the community through volunteering," reads Max's citation. "Max was a valued member of the 5th Aurora Scouting Group, a sideperson at Trinity Church Aurora, [and] a Best Buddy at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School. He is also a member of the Town of Aurora's Accessibility Advisory Committee. No matter the role, Max always has a smile on his face and is eager to lend a helping hand with his insight or creativity. Max is an exemplary member of our youth community and demonstrates every day that there is no limit to what one can achieve when you are passionate about the work at hand.

SENIOR VOLUNTEER AWARD ? JANE SNAPE

"Jane is a vital part of the Aurora Seniors' Centre, continuously volunteering her time with the Aurora Seniors Association (ASA). Whether she is coordinating pickleball or on the court as a coach, leading the puzzle delivery program, in the kitchen, or at the reception desk, Jane is always willing to help with a friendly smile. During the pandemic, Jane has continued to provide her unwavering volunteer efforts to older adults and seniors in our community. Jane is a valued member of the ASA Re-Opening Committee, where her role is to actively conduct research into COVID-19 protocols, draft operating procedures and acts occasionally as committee secretary. Outside of the ASA, Jane also made face masks for distribution to family and friends and donated nearly 100 masks to the Aurora Seniors' Centre. Jane's cheerful attitude, skills, and work ethic make her a pleasure to be around and an exceptional volunteer."

GREEN AWARD ? TURTLE TIAS

The Green Award is presented to individuals, businesses or community organizations that support the protection, preservation, sustainability or conservation of our natural environment. This year's award goes to a group who have been working on the ground to improve the environment one turtle at a time.

The Turtle Tias, comprised of five dedicated residents - Pippette Eibel, Wendy Kenyon, Flo Leava, Rebecca Prins, and Maricella Saucedo - have devoted countless hours of volunteer work to protect the snapping turtle and painted turtle populations in our community. The group places nesting cages around Town to ensure the safety of turtle eggs after a female snapper has laid her clutch, protecting against predators and other harmful elements. The cages are regularly monitored by the group to ensure they are not disturbed by animals. The hatchlings are directed away from busy streets towards the safety of the nearest wetlands. The wellbeing of the adult female turtles and their hatchlings is critical. The group successfully released well over 400 hatchlings, and their impactful work continues to make a difference for the environmental welfare of our Town.

ARTS & CULTURE AWARD - PINE TREE POTTERS GUILD

Each year, the Arts & Culture Award is presented to an individual or group that has enhanced the community through the support or promotion of culture, music, visual, performing, or literary arts. This year's recipients, the Pine Tree Potters Guild, have helped mold the community with each ball of clay thrown on their wheels.

For more than four decades, the Pine Tree Potters' Guild has been an instrumental part of the Aurora Arts & Culture Community. The Guild frequently contributes to cultural events and arts programs such as The Queen's York Rangers' Recognition Tile Project, the Royal Canadian Legion's Raise the Roof campaign, and assisting local Boy Scouts and Girl Guides to earn their required badges. As a fundraising entity, Empty Bowls Aurora has been delivered by the Pine Tree Potters' Guild since 2010. In support of a wide variety of local charities, most recently Aurora's Welcoming Arms and Inn from the Cold, handmade bowls are filled with soup from local chefs for community members to enjoy. To date, the Empty Bowls Aurora program has raised over \$200,000 for those in need. The Guild and its members continue to strive towards the advancement of arts and culture in Aurora.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD - KATE GREAVETTE

Aurora's Community Leadership Award is presented to those who have significantly enhanced the Town through their contribution, commitment and leadership in charitable giving, civic engagement, community events or community spirit. This year's recipient, Kate Greavette, has worked to underscore the issue of food insecurity both here in Aurora and across York Region.

Kate inspires members of the community with her passion and commitment to take on a leadership role wherever and whenever she is needed. Through her work with the York Region Food Network, Kate has taken the lead to provide a healthy, accessible and sustainable food system to families and individuals in Aurora. Through the pandemic, she has raised public awareness on several issues impacting our community through creative programming, outreach, and advocacy initiatives. Kate has supported Big Brothers Big Sisters of York and other community partners by providing interactive cooking nights and sharing her creative input on a number of mentorship programs. Kate utilizes her platform to showcase what it means to be a good leader and continually give back to those in our community who need it most.

GOOD NEIGHBOUR AWARD - DAVID PILKEY

In any community, good neighbours stand out from the crowd - and the Town's Good Neighbour Award is presented to someone who embodies that spirit. This year's recipient, David Pilkey, embodies this spirit with a musical note.

David has been a good neighbour to so many Aurora residents for decades. He has played an instrumental role in our community by sharing his musical talent and always being there for those in need. Through his years of volunteerism at Aurora United Church, David has performed during services and has been an active participant in the choir and other large ensembles. David's live performances became a staple of community church events such as the Out of the Cold Breakfast. His kind-heartedness for those young and old, long-time residents, or those new to the community, was undeterred as he always finds the time and energy for

others. David is always there to offer a ride to and from an event or meaningful conversation, if the situation calls for it. David's understanding of the needs within our community makes him an exemplary good neighbour.?

COMMUNITY SAFETY AWARD ? NANCY SCOTT STANLEY

?In her role as crossing guard, Nancy always goes above and beyond to ensure the safety of students and every member of her community who crosses her path daily. No matter the weather, Nancy is there with a smile on her face to greet each of her neighbours by name and wish them the best for the day ahead. The simple act of kindness is cherished by parents in the neighbourhood, as it has become an invaluable part of their walk to school routine. Nancy's actions have developed a high level of trust and instills confidence within each family knowing she always has their safety and best interests in mind. Nancy exemplifies kindness and selflessness to ensure our communities feel protected.?

GOOD BUSINESS AWARD ? COLIN CAMPBELL (CAMPBELL REAL ESTATE)

The Good Business Award is presented to businesses that have shown a commitment to ?assisting Aurora's economic prosperity, corporate responsibility, and community involvement? through the support of charitable causes, events, or programs.

?The Campbell Real Estate Team, led by Colin Campbell, gives back with a great deal of compassion and love for our community. In 2019, the team, in collaboration with Curtis White and the Aurora Superstore, initiated two programs: The Back Pack Initiative and Feeding Families for the Holidays. Looking out for those who were less fortunate, both of these programs were geared towards providing families and individuals with items that some may take for granted. The Back Pack Initiative provided backpacks and essential school supplies for students [for] them to succeed in the classroom. The other program, Feeding the Families for the Holidays, donated turkey dinners during the holiday season. Both of these initiatives surpassed their initial targets and the Campbell Real Estate Team hopes to continue this trajectory into the future.?

INCLUSIVITY AWARD ? JAY SAVEALL

?Jay Saveall is President of Green Side Up Contracting and over the past year has showcased his community spirit and desire to give back to his hometown. He has made significant monetary donations in support of community initiatives, which makes Aurora a more accessible and inclusive place for all. Jay donated \$7,000 to Welcoming Arms to increase the accessibility of meals the foundation provides. At Green Side Up Contracting, Jay has incorporated a ?give back strategy'?, where \$500 from each project of \$10,000 or more is set aside to be donated to food banks in each of their respective communities. Through their generosity and kind acts, Jay and Green Side Up Contracting continually aim to make Aurora a better place to live.?