

## Vern Cunningham named Aurora's 2024 Citizen of the Year



From promoting business to lending a very kind and warm helping hand to those experiencing bereavement and loss, Vern Cunningham has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make Aurora a kind and caring community.

He's done so quietly for decades, but his volunteer achievements were trumpeted loud and clear on Monday night as he was named Aurora's 2024 Citizen of the Year.

Unable to be present at this week's Community Recognition Awards ceremony due to a long-planned vacation, Cunningham was surprised with the recognition on Wednesday night at a small ceremony hosted by Mayor Tom Mrakas at a local restaurant where he was celebrated by friends and family. He will formally receive the award at Council on June 25.

At this week's Awards ceremony, the Mayor said Cunningham was "incredibly honoured and humbled" by the recognition.

"Vern has achieved a lot here in our community over the years, as a businessman, but of course also as a volunteer," said Mayor Mrakas at the May 27 event. "While running his very successful local business, he helped support other small business owners through his work at the Chamber (of Commerce), serving as a board member in the early 2000s, chairing the Business Achievement Awards, and serving as an ambassador for the York Region Small Business Enterprise Centre.

"In his retirement, he doubled down on his commitment to strengthening our community, joining the Optimist Club and serving as president of the Probus Club for two years, where he still remains on the Board. He has done other incredibly important volunteer work, including sitting on the Board of the Bereaved Families of York Region, and becoming a member of the Hope House Hospice bereavement team.

"Most recently, in 2022, he joined the board of the Aurora Seniors' Centre and began chairing the Fundraising Committee " and in his first year as Chair, he helped raise over \$15,000. He is also the driving force behind the Aurora Whiskey Society, where in addition to being a place for whiskey lovers to socialize, [the society] has also raised funds to support important local organizations

like CHATS.?

Mrakas hailed Cunningham as a "compassionate, selfless community leader who has touched so many lives and whose work has made Aurora a stronger and better place."

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter