

Volunteers celebrated as MP bestows Coronation Medals for community contributions



Community-builders in Aurora and Newmarket were honoured for their work on Friday as MP Tony Van Bynen presented 20 residents with the King Charles III Coronation Medal.

Created by the Federal Government last year to mark the Coronation of Charles III and Queen Camilla on May 6, 2023, the honour was intended to recognize those who have made their country, their province, and/or their community better places.

“Martin Luther King, Jr., said, “Everybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve, you don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by a light,” said the MP, saluting those who were honoured at Newmarket's Old Town Hall. “I believe this quote nicely captures the spirit and the will of the group that is being honoured today.

“Perhaps you have not changed the world, but without doubt you have made our communities better places to live. You have touched neighbours with kindness, you have provided support for those in need, you have inspired others to join a movement and you have demonstrated that regardless of age we can all make a positive difference in the lives of those around us. Your efforts have created a more connected community, a place to feel we belong, and all of this leads to better health and wellbeing.” Honoured on December 13 were:

Sajel Bellon

Michael Braithwaite

Major Robert Brain

Kirby Brock

Geoff Brown

Dan Banks

Robert Cole

Michael Croxon

Juliane Goyette

Jerisha Grant-Hall

Lori Hoyes

Arif Khan

Glenn Marais

Brian North

Jackie Playter

Sarah Riddell

Peter Van Schaik

Doug Steele

Beth Stevenson

Hilary Van Welter

This week and next, we will shine a light on recipients that live, work or have had a direct impact on Aurora residents.

DAN BANKS

"Aurora Special Olympics program may not exist without Dan's exhaustive efforts," reads Banks' citation. "For years he has been a coach and passionate advocate for athletes. In addition to taking on enormous behind-the-scenes administrative burden, looking after equipment and uniform procurement, budgeting, securing venues for practice and competition, and more. Without him, I know about 200 kids and adults with disabilities over the last decades who would miss out on better health, amazing friendships, enrichment and exercise ? more importantly, confidence in themselves, shelves full of medals and pride in their achievement. He raises the money, he fights for the spaces, he coaches, he mentors ? he really does it all. And apparently, when he's not doing all that, he helps the community working as a detective with York Regional Police!?"

MICHAEL BRAITHWAITE

"Michael is the CEO of Blue Door in York Region, an organization dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness. With help, Blue Door in 2023 provided 40,000+ nights of safety, 115,000+ meals, and 925 youth, family, adult and seniors, whose safety and support to escape homelessness. Blue Door also operates Construct, an employment social enterprise. Recently, Blue Door held a ground-breaking at Kevin's Place in Newmarket, as they begin the process of the redevelopment of the property, replacing it with 14 stacked townhomes, providing transitional and emergency housing for families. Michael is committed to making sure that every Canadian has a safe and affordable home."

DOUG STEELE

"Chair of the Executive Council for the charity Welcoming Arms for over five years and a volunteer over at Welcome Table?Welcoming Arms is an Aurora-based charity encompassing Bridging the Gap, Welcome Table, and Martha's Table, programs

supporting low income or marginalized individuals and families in the area. He is as comfortable washing the dishes as he is providing leadership at the Executive Council. He has made a significant contribution to help meet the needs of low-income families in Aurora.?

LORI HOYES

?Lori's commitment to various charitable and community organizations has made a significant impact and her tireless efforts exemplify the spirit of volunteerism. Lori has dedicated her time to the Army Cadet support committee; Royal Canadian Legion Executive, Aurora Historical Society, Aurora Prayer Breakfast Committee, and 100 Women Who Care. Lori has played a key role in partnering with the Salvation Army to support local food and toy drives during Christmas. She also supports the local food pantry and Welcoming Arms, which aid low-income families. As a leader at her local church's kids club, Lori has been a leader?and has volunteered in the nursery for over a decade. During the pandemic, Lori initiated the Sign Wars in Aurora, encouraging local businesses to engage in fun and uplifting competition.?

ROBERT COLE

?With over 30 years in volunteer service with Scouts Canada, Bob has been a tireless advocate for the program, serving in numerous roles at the grassroots level, interacting with youth and adult volunteers, not only at the weekly meetings, but as a competent and dedicated administrator in dealing with recruitment and retention of youth and volunteers, fiscal management and fundraising. He has camped hundreds of nights in all kinds of weather and shared his skills with hundreds of youth and adult volunteers. He is always willing to pitch in and help with whatever task is at hand. He is participating in and led numerous training weekends at sessions for new Scouters for more than a decade. Through his commitment to documenting the activities of others for their services to Scouting, more than 30 Scouts have received recognition such as the Medal of Merit and many have been the beneficiaries of hundreds of commendations that he has submitted over the decades for serving Scouters and high-achieving youth. Bob has been instrumental in the annual Scout Brigade at Ford George weekend where the living history of the War of 1812-1814 is experienced by Canadian and US Scouting members. Bob holds the Silver Acorn in recognition of his long and dedicated service along with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pin.?

NEXT WEEK: Business and volunteer leaders who have had an impact on local health care, including Southlake Health, and in the Police Service.

By Brock Weir