

## Volunteers honoured for nearly 300 years of community service



Volunteers help make a municipality a true community, and this year scores of volunteers were honoured by the Town for a combined 270 years of community service.

Aurora's Community Recognition Awards took place at Town Hall this past May and, in addition to local residents honoured for their contributions to arts and culture, community safety, accessibility, and more, others were recognized for truly having staying power for the organizations and causes that drive them.

"It's undeniable that the essence of any community lies in its people, especially the volunteers whose dedication and actions drive real impact," said Mayor Tom Mrakas at the ceremony. "Tonight, we gather to honour the countless contributions of these volunteers whose dedication keeps Aurora vibrant and an extraordinary place. Each nomination was remarkable, showcasing just how extraordinary our community truly is. We are so fortunate to live in a community where generosity is not an exception, but a way of life. Aurora is stronger, more compassionate, and more vibrant because of the countless contributions of people like you?" our volunteers.

"Whether you mentor youth, support charitable causes, coach sports teams, coordinate cultural programs, or lend a hand helping those in need, your impact resonates far beyond what is seen. You help shape lives and build community in a way that is both profound and lasting. You don't volunteer to be recognized, but tonight we shine a spotlight on you because you deserve it. To those who nominated this year's award-recipients, thank you. Thank you for your efforts to help bring well-deserved attention to those who might otherwise stay quietly in the background guiding us all the while."

### GLEN SHARP ? 20 YEARS(Optimist Club of Aurora)

"Glen has been a steadfast member of the Optimist Club of Aurora and has served in many leadership roles, including being President twice, also being the Secretary and Treasurer," said Mayor Mrakas reading his citation. "He's been active on the Board and has led several committees, also lending his energy, enthusiasm and time to key events like the Chamber's Home Show, Mobile Kitchen, Chess Tournament, Aurora Minor Hockey Showcase, and marshalling at the Santa Under the Stars Parade."

### LISA DiSERA ? 25 YEARS(Society of Saint Vincent de Paul)

"Lisa has attended countless meetings to gather crucial information to better serve those in our Aurora community who are facing difficulties and are seeking their assistance. She has supported countless families through hundreds of home visits and valuable support in navigating access to essential social services, agencies, and programs. She has been instrumental in guiding numerous

local projects focused on food security programs and led efforts like the North of 60 Project, where she serves on a committee that supports an isolated Inuit community. Lisa's dedication in assisting her neighbors embodies community spirit.?

#### TERRY SHERIN ? 25 YEARS(Optimist Club of Aurora)

?Terry has served as the Optimist Club of Aurora as President and Treasurer and is a driving force behind the Club's mobile kitchen, bringing food and community spirit to numerous events around Town. He's been dedicated to helping with events including the Chamber's Home Show, Beer Tasting, Chess Tournament, Aurora Minor Hockey Showcase, and marshalling the Santa Under the Stars Parade.?

#### JUDY RYAN ? 30 YEARS(Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society/Garden Aurora)

?Since joining in 1995, Judy has generously shared her time and leadership skills, serving as a dedicated Board member, including roles as Treasurer and Publicity Chair, and she was also instrumental in planning the Society's annual public plant sales. Judy has held many Board roles and took on the significant role of being the Garden Tour Chair from 2009 to 2024. Her dedication and showcasing the skills of Aurora gardeners through these tours brought visitors from far and wide to admire our local horticultural talents. For her extensive contributions, Judy now holds a life membership in the Society.?

#### ALEX ANSELL ? 40 YEARS(Optimist Club of Aurora)

?Alex is not just a long-standing member, he is a Charter Member, a founding pillar of the Optimist Club of Aurora, and over those four decades, he has been a steadfast champion for the youth of our Town, serving in numerous leadership roles, including President twice, and he has also dedicated many years to the Board of Directors and currently holds the position of Secretary. Alex's commitment extends beyond the local club. He is a Past Governor of the Central Ontario District and a Past Vice President of the Optimist International, demonstrating his dedication to the wider Optimist movement. Here in Aurora, Alex has been a driving force behind the annual Minor Hockey Optimist Showcase, and he has also been the long-time chair of the Aurora Home Show Pub and Grill Committee, and has been a constant presence with the club's mobile kitchen at countless community events, the annual Chess Tournament, and marshalling the Santa Under the Stars Parade. Alex, your remarkable 40 years of continuous service, your leadership, and your profound dedication to the Optimist Club and the youth of Aurora are truly inspiring and deeply appreciated.?

#### KEN McISAAC ? 40 YEARS(Optimist Club of Aurora)

?Ken is also a charter member and for four decades he has been a constant supporter of our Town's youth, serving as President twice and dedicating many years to the Board of Directors. Ken has been a powerful driving force behind the annual Book Sale, and Ken has also been an active participant in numerous Optimist Club events, including the Aurora Home Show Pub and Grill, the Mobile Kitchen at multiple Town events, the annual Chess Tournament, and the Minor Hockey Optimist Showcase Tournament.?

#### GRANT PERRY ? 40 YEARS(Optimist Club of Aurora)

?We continue to celebrate the remarkable individuals who have shaped the Optimist Club of Aurora, and we now recognize Grant Perry for an incredible 40 years. Grant is also a charter member. For four decades, he has been a loyal presence, serving as President, and dedicating many years to the Board of Directors. Grant has been dedicated to a wide range of the Optimist Club's vital initiatives. You'll find him assisting with the Chamber Home Show, the Club's mobile kitchen, at community events, the Santa Under the Stars Parade, the annual Chess Tournament, and the exciting Minor Hockey Optimist Showcase Tournament. Grant, your 40 years of continuous service and your foundational commitment to the Optimist Club and the youth of Aurora is appreciated. Thank you for your unwavering commitment.?

#### BOBBY PANDOLFI ? 50 YEARS(Aurora Garden & Horticultural Society/Garden Aurora)

?Bobby has served in numerous leadership roles on the board, including Treasurer, Auditor, and as President. Bobby has also

tirelessly headed up a wide array of vital committees, including those for awards, properties, the yearbook, creating the flower show, schedules, civic improvement, and publicity. Her dedication has resulted in an astounding number of volunteer hours, and she now holds a well-deserved Life Membership in the society. For many years, she undertook a special project at Billings Well on Yonge Street, creating stunning gardens for all Aurora. Now, her initiative secured grants to establish Billings Wells as a teaching garden for water conservation, where she lovingly planted hundreds of plants and bulbs. Bobby, your passion for horticulture and your remarkable 50 years of continuous service have profoundly enriched Garden Aurora and our community.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter