

Special volunteers given fond farewell

By Mark Pavilons



Get involved in your community as much as possible. It's so rewarding.

No truer words have been spoken. And they come from Sue and Peter Iaboni, long-time King volunteers. The couple moved away from their cherished community, settling in closer to family in the Toronto area.

Local residents, volunteers, dignitaries and members of Arts Society King (ASK) bid the couple a fond farewell last Wednesday at an event held at Seneca College.

Maria May, dean, Faculty of Applied Arts & Health Sciences at Seneca College, said the Iabonis will long be remembered for their contribution toward name space at the college. Your legacy will carry on, she told the crowd.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer worked with Peter on HAC and is grateful for his passion and leadership.

Blair Day, president of the ASK board, said his heart is filled with thanks over what such volunteers have contributed. He said Sue is one of those volunteers who doesn't know how to stop and Peter was someone they could always count on for help.

Sue has been to me, as I began to volunteer with Arts Society King, a tireless and constant mentor and help.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini pointed to the number of Township councillors and staff who were on hand to pay tribute to the Iabonis.

This speaks volumes about the couple's contributions and the mayor was personally humbled by your generosity of spirit and compassion for your community. You have both given your time, your warmth, your humour and your caring to make King a better place.

Peter spent the last 33 years in King, raising his family. I've really loved my time here.

Their departure is bittersweet. Peter noted he's made numerous connections over the years with his church, local sports organizations, neighbours and fellow volunteers.

Sue has been here for the past 11 years and together, they were fully engaged in many aspects of King's culture and heritage.

Sue recalls that when she moved here she didn't know a soul in King. That changed very quickly and the community welcomed her with open arms. After starting a writing group, she became involved in ASK and her friendships and network grew exponentially.

Her interest in promoting the arts allowed her and ASK to grow and flourish. Her main role was overseeing the quarterly publication Mosaic, a high-calibre magazine that promotes the arts community in King. It has developed to become an outstanding publication that rivals any in other communities.

It's been a work of passion, she said, noting she spent the last few months overseeing the transition of roles in light of her departure.

She has also been involved in King for Refugees, a relatively new organization that has helped settled refugee families in the area.

The experience has been both fulfilling and eye-opening, she noted.

Sue was one of the recipients of special recognition at the 2015 volunteer appreciation event. She was honoured for her work with ASK, the York Region Arts Council, the King Museum Board and the SHIFT Committee.

Peter has been involved in the congregation of Sacred Heart Church. He coached soccer and was involved in Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT). He found his niche helping to preserve history and heritage, through the Heritage Advisory Committee. A lot of the group's work has been to encourage residents to get their properties on the Heritage Registry.

Over the years, the Iabonis have been cornerstones of the community and they've formed many bonds. In King, local politicians are keen on not only encouraging public engagement, but establishing long-term friendships. Unlike other municipalities, King councillors and staff are friends and neighbours.

The Iabonis were simply amazed that they call the mayor and councillors by their first names.

‘It’s really amazing to have that kind of relationship,’ he said.

Peter, a retired principal, always wanted to give back. He took all those lessons his teachers gave him to heart. Sue, a retired principal, pointed out that when people get older, they still want to be productive and volunteering gives them a purpose.

King is growing, but development has given the municipality the opportunity to grow, too, and provide some amazing new facilities.

Sue pointed to the new municipal complex, the new library and seniors' centre, and the new recreation centre that will serve all residents long into the future.

One of the highlights during her time with ASK was the car rally, where people drove around King and experienced the bounty we have to offer. The next event is slated for 2020.

The Iabonis are also avid hikers and have explored King on various trails.

Peter said his fondest memories were the neighbourhood street parties and regular pumpkin growing contests that brought residents together.

He also encourages everyone to volunteer and meet like-minded people. Volunteering in any capacity is rewarding and addicting.

Sue said they've already looked into volunteer opportunities in their new neighbourhood.

The Iabonis may have physically left their King City community, but not their roots. They will return, they said, for regular community events, fairs and celebrations.

Wherever they go, the Iabonis will continue their legacy of giving back.