

Best night of the year honours King's volunteers

By Mark Pavilons

The atmosphere was electric as King celebrated the most important night of the year – the annual Volunteer Appreciation Night. The event lit up the new municipal centre and residents packed the venue to show their support our cherished citizens who give back.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini was bursting with pride on this night and he stressed in today's world where many are "time-poor" our volunteers continue to give. They are, in fact, essential to King's way of life.

Volunteering according to Wikipedia is generally considered an altruistic activity where an individual or group provides services for no financial or social gain "to benefit another person, group or organization."

According to a survey completed by Statistics Canada, 93% of volunteers say they are motivated by their desire to contribute to their community.

"Volunteerism is essential to King. Not only do your efforts create a foundation that defines the character of King, but they immeasurably enhance the quality of our community," Pellegrini said.

"I have said it before; volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless."

Councillor Jordan Cescolini said every good memory he has growing up in King relates to local volunteers; someone giving up their time.

Councillor David Boyd presented some interesting stats on volunteerism.

He pointed out that Canadians who have never been married are the most likely to volunteer. Parents with school aged children have significantly higher rates of volunteering than people without children at home. Those 15-24 represent the highest percentage of volunteers (at 58%).

"I can't imagine a King without our volunteers – whether you're a Knight a Lion, sit on a board or contribute to the Nobleton Tree lighting, I am so thankful we have such outstanding volunteers."

Councillor Jakob Schneider said his parents installed in him the importance of volunteering, from an early age. This ultimately laid the groundwork for his continued service as councillor.

Councillor Bill Cober said there's a lot of competition for people's time today and he lauded local volunteers who take the lead in many community events and cultivate the "rich community spirit."

"The gift of time from our volunteers is remarkable."

Councillor Debbie Schaefer noted volunteers have enriched her life personally and King is enhanced by those who give their creativity and energy. She said she's amazed at the diverse ways in which people choose to give.

Volunteers, according to Councillor Avia Eek, provide added value to our lives. In King, there's something to suit everyone's desire to serve.

Citizen of the Year

The evening culminated in King's top honour – the Citizen of the Year.

This year the accolades went to Bruce Craig, current chair of Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT).

The highly engaged community activist, a common face at council meetings, was almost speechless when he came forward to accept the award. He thanked his long-time friends and colleagues who attended the evening. For Craig, his mantra is how much can be accomplished when we all just listen and understand one another.

A member of the King City Bible Church, Bruce is part of the "Missions and Compassion Team," which identifies opportunities to help individuals. An active member of King for Refugees, Bruce is compassionately involved with families providing social and emotional support, assisting with fundraising efforts and most recently is an integral member of its Planning and Administration Team helping propel the organization forward.

He's also a past member of the King Township Environmental Advisory Committee and was instrumental in forming the Tree Focus Group, helping to preserve trees in King.

Mayor Pellegrini said Craig is known for his gentle and loving voice.

You have become a dear friend to many and are a compassionate and caring individual who has a tremendous ability to give to others. A good and caring neighbour to all, you have been a blessing to many through your thoughtful and generous nature.

Craig was among several CCKT volunteers recognized with Provincial Volunteer Service Awards in 2017.

Craig is a retired elementary school teacher with YRDSB and a King City resident since 1992. Bruce's engagement with CCKT goes back to the Big Pipe sewer conflict and Community Plan and Official Plan planning processes in King in the mid-1990s. Bruce has been concerned with several environmental and planning related issues facing King, sustaining and preserving the Oak Ridges Moraine in particular.

Special Recognition Award

Lisa Barenthin received the award for her tremendous efforts within the community. She helps organize and execute a taekwondo tournament in Pottageville for the school, and has been the coordinator and organizer of the annual Terry Fox Run in King for 13 years. Your dedication and leadership for the community is truly inspiring.

Jerry MacBain got the nod for his involvement and dedication to coaching in the Nobleton Minor Hockey Association for several years. He was also chair of Nobleton arena for roughly 20 years. He's an active member of the Nobleton Lions Club and held the position of president.

Anne Peat was honoured for her service assisting with King Township Archives, helping organize documents related to the histories of families who have or still live in King. She generously volunteers with Hospice King-Aurora (now known as Hope House Community Hospice). She also assists in the program Picking up the Pieces which offers assistance to patients after forgoing their cancer treatments.

Your sensitivity, care and compassion for others is truly uplifting.

Elaine Robertson was praised for her work as a member of the Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee for over 30 years and president for eight years. She's been a long-time member of the Historical Society and Arts Society King and is actively involved with preserving Kettleby. She volunteered at the Kettleby Fair.

Non-Resident

New this year was the Special Recognition Award Non Resident.

Len Adams has been an instructor for many years at the King City Seniors Centre, teaching Gentle Motion (a form of Tai-Chi), encouraging seniors to be active and lead a healthy lifestyle. He participates in a cycling fundraising event for blindness.

Dima Berchalli and Mohammad Totah served as directors for King for Refugees, contributing countless hours in volunteer service which has enriched the lives of newcomer families in The Township of King.

You have been instrumental in sponsoring and welcoming new families to the community; generously preparing foods, attending settlement group meetings, organizing schooling for both adults and children, organizing budgeting, financial management and assisting families in settling into life in Canada.

Caledon's Barb Downey was recognized for her role as past-president and current director of the Nobleton & King City Horticultural Society. She's actively involved in the Flower Show Committee, the Garden Tour Committee and is occasionally a guest speaker providing floral and decorating tips.

Your dedication, commitment and inspiring floral designs are truly admired by all!

Haider Meghjee & Aziza Amarshi were honoured for providing a series of free monthly wellness talks and complimentary nutrition and wellness seminars offered at the King City Library and for seniors at the King City Senior Centre. They have been instrumental to the community by building and providing exceptional friendly service at the King City Guardian Pharmacy, and volunteering for the King for Refugees by helping initiate a fundraising program, and mentoring and providing employment to several of King's newcomer youths. They also support the Run for Southlake Hospital, and created a team in the Sporting Life Walk which supports Camp Ooch (patients of Sick Children's Hospital). They also support the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation Ride for Cancer.

Senior Citizen Award of Merit

Mary Aldcroft was honoured for her service with the King City Senior Centre and Board of Management, operating as the kitchen convenor. She makes sure the entire center's functions have the necessities they require. Known for her helpful nature, she is often found driving seniors to and from doctor's appointments, food shopping, assisting with pet care when the owners have been away, and organizing weekly bingo and other events in her building. Aldcroft is known for her great smile and contagious laugh. Carol Field was singled out for her time serving as acting chair of the King City Seniors Centre; attending monthly board meetings, ensuring the members have a variety of programs and events they can participate in, such as pot lucks, barbecues, fashion shows, day trips, bridge and painting classes. She's a member of the Nobleton & King City Horticultural Society and has generously hosted garden tours, maintained the seasonal outdoor arrangements as well as planted and nourished the centre's gardens. A concerned and helpful neighbour, she is often seen driving people to their appointments, and assisting in any way she can.

Youth Award of Merit

Shannon Adams was honoured for her dedication and time assisting emergent readers and children through the King Township Public Library Reading Buddies Program.

Dylan DiGirolamo was praised for participating with the volunteering program HOSA Canada, a health science student organization that enhances and develops the quality for future professionals of health education within the high school. Dylan is also involved in King fundraising events such as MS drives, Cure for Cancer, Township's summer fairs and events and at the Trisan Centre, helping coaches and training younger players.

Mahya Subedar assists emergent readers and children through the King Township Public Library Reading Buddies Program.