

Accolades pour in for Henry Verbruggen

By Mark Pavilons

The community has lost one of its most engaged citizens.

Henry Verbruggen, a mainstay of the Schomberg community, passed away last week. He was 64.

Accolades came from everyone who knew him, from colleagues at the Schomberg Agricultural Society and residents' groups, to local politicians. Henry was incredibly engaged in all aspects of King Township and was a strong advocate for being involved in local issues.

"I'm heartbroken," said Cathy D'Alessandro, manager of the Schomberg Agricultural Society. "Henry was a great person. He was a most dedicated volunteer and involved in every community group imaginable. He was an active, valued member of the Schomberg Agricultural Society for many years as a director and committee chairperson. He was always the first one there to help in any way he could. Henry will be greatly missed."

Mayor Steve Pellegrini echoed those sentiments.

"Henry was a passionate community volunteer who gave tirelessly to the many organizations he was involved with."

"Henry was a tremendously dedicated community volunteer. Henry was a member of the Schomberg Agricultural Society, Schomberg Village Association and supported many community initiatives with countless hours of volunteer service. His work to support our Farmers' Market, Fair and a Main Street Christmas were great examples of his generous contribution of his time and effort. Henry will be missed greatly as he was such an integral member of our community family," said Councillor Bill Cober. Verbruggen, along with Andy MacPherson, were passionate about bringing the farmers' market to Schomberg.

"As a farmer myself, I fully supported their efforts in making this market successful," said Councillor Avia Eek. "Henry was always a tireless volunteer."

Councillor Linda Pabst said Verbruggen was one of the "most amazing, hard working volunteers in Schomberg," who was always willing to help, no matter if it was for business, a friend or a volunteer group. "The Schomberg community will surely miss Henry." Good friend Andy MacPherson said Henry was dedicated to his community and a tireless worker for the organizations he belonged to.

Henry loved his garden and his dog Bailey and could be found in the back yard enjoying both the garden and the company of his dog. He had a great sense of humor, and loved to go out for a meal with his family and friends. He was immensely proud of his two nieces and their accomplishments through university. He made friends wherever he went. He was well respected in his work as an engineer.

At one time he was a member of the local Chamber of Commerce and was one of the founding members of the Schomberg Curling Club.

"I first met Henry about six years ago when I was asked to join the Schomberg Village Association of which he was a founding member. At Main Street Christmas you could find him early in the morning setting our pylons along the parade route and again he was following the last tractor in the Parade of Lights at night."

"At the Schomberg Farmers' Market, of which he was a founding member, he was at the market first and the last to leave. He never stopped trying to improve the market. He was always looking for new vendors. He loved meeting the people that came to the market and always had a smile for them."

"For many years you could always find Henry at a council meeting keeping up with what was going on in his community. If you needed anything from the Township, Henry always knew who to contact."

"I will miss him at my table for supper and sharing a single malt afterwards."

Verbruggen's efforts weren't limited to Schomberg.

Patty Fleetwood, of the Nobleton Village Association, said Henry often helped out with the Nobleton Victoria Day celebrations and parade.

"This is a major loss to the community," she said. "Henry was a great man with a heart of gold. He will be sadly missed by all who worked with him over the years. I will miss him."

Henry was a good man and outstanding volunteer in King Township, said Lucy Belperio, former Chamber of Commerce president. "He will be missed as the Grand Marshall at the Nobleton Victoria Day parade and for his good works throughout the Township. His kindness and sense of civic duty will always be remembered fondly."