

King's volunteers are the foundation of the community

By Mark Pavilons



One special night hardly seems enough to recognize the talents and contributions of King's finest volunteers.

The community gathered last week to pay tribute to some very special individuals, those who share a passion for others and serving their town.

Many of the volunteers have spent a lifetime giving back and they, in turn, were honoured during the annual Volunteer Appreciation Night held last Thursday at the Kingbridge Centre.

In what is Mayor Steve Pellegrini's favourite event of the year, he had nothing but praise for his cherished citizens.

'Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity where an individual or group provides services for no financial gain to benefit another person, group or organization.' Well in King volunteers donate thousands of hours for all kinds of causes. Without them King Township would be a very different place.

According to Statistics Canada about 44% of Canadians aged 15 and over donate their time, energy and skills to charities and non-profit organizations. According to a survey completed by Statistics Canada, 93% of volunteers say they are motivated by their desire to contribute to their community.

And although they may volunteer in many different ways, they all have one thing in common they obviously love what they do.

Volunteers help shape and strengthen our community, according to Councillor David Boyd. In fact, they're the very heart and soul of our Township, noted Councillor Linda Pabst. Countless hours go into every community event and that's why Councillor Bill Cober is so proud to call King his home. Every resident benefits from the volunteer efforts, which enhance the quality of life, observed Councillor Debbie Schaefer. These folks are the backbone of a very close-knit community, said Councillor Avia Eek. You make it (King Township) the beautiful community that it is, said King-Vaughan MP Deb Schulte. Federal politicians get to see first-hand the tremendous difference volunteers make, according to York-Simcoe MP Peter Van Loan. The value is the fact that volunteers demonstrate the notion of citizenship and act as role models for future generations, said long-serving MPP Julia Munro.

Citizens of the Year

The top honour this year goes to a long-serving couple who hail from King City. The Citizen of the Year award is presented in recognition of Bill and Kathy Patterson's special dedication, generosity and time to the community as long-time residents of King; members of the Oak Ridge's Trail Association (ORTA); participating in weekly hikes and assisting with transportation and special events; active supporters of King for Refugees by assisting newcomers with medical and dental visits, organizing transportation and providing practical assistance with day to day living. Dental hygiene is a really important for elderly citizens specifically, dental plans are often only available in specific states. Websites like [Let's Say Thanks](#) offer comparisons so it's easier for you to pick the best one out of the countless options available on the market. But anyway, this amazing couple are also members of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, volunteering and serving in a variety of roles within the church. Kathy has submitted weekly reports on behalf of the church, printed in the King Weekly Sentinel. They are members of the Cold Creek Conservation Stewardship supporting the efforts of the committee to encourage conservation of natural resources. Both have been instrumental in blessing and enriching the lives of many through your thoughtful and generous volunteer service. Bill Patterson said their work with King for Refugees is a huge team effort inspired by Ann Raney. That project is a tremendous joy and privilege, a gift that gives back. Kathy added this honour was quite a surprise and she said it's a privilege to volunteer in King Township.

Lifetime Achievement Award

This year, two King residents received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award. A very well known face of King's own mosaic is none other than Jane Underhill. The long-time resident of King served as Councillor for Ward 5 for three terms. Underhill was the founding member and president of Preserve the Village; Founding Member of King Environmental Group; member and supporter of Concerned Citizens of King Township. She contributed through her involvement as a member of the King City Tennis Club, King Township Heritage Advisory Committee, King City Seniors' Centre and a former member of the King City Trails Committee. As a 60-year resident, Underhill admitted she was a bit of a trouble-maker often leading petitions for improvements to her community, a place she loves so dearly. She thanked all of her supporters over the years. Bray's Fuels has not only been a successful, multi-generational family business, it has a long track record of community involvement. The company assisted the community by providing fuel to emergency personnel during the 2003 blackout and the Horlings Dyke failure in 2013. Bray's was sponsor of the annual Muck Vegetable Growers Conference supporting the horticultural community for over 20 years. The Brayhill Farms Museum was open to the public, allowing access to a vast array of automotive related memorabilia. The company also sponsored hockey and soccer teams, specifically the Ansnorveldt Baseball team for many years. Founder Alan Bray received the honours.

Special Recognition Awards

Several residents were presented with Special Recognition Awards.

President of the Schomberg Minor Hockey Association Kelly Harbridge was the first. He was praised for his collaborative efforts that just recently led to the formation of the new King Township Hockey Association.

President of the Nobleton Minor Hockey Association Mike Baldesarra was similarly honoured for his involvement in the new King Township Hockey Association.

One of the highlights of the night was the unveiling of the new colours for the King Township Rebellion, an ode to our involvement in the Mackenzie Rebellion of 1837.

Catherine Flear also received praise. She was founding member of King City Community Garden; Member of the Nobleton/King Horticultural Society; an active participant with King City Seniors' Centre and volunteer with Hospice King Aurora.

Her involvement as president of the King City Business Community Association, bringing neighbourhood awareness to local establishments in town, saw Ana Pronio receive her award. Ana is a member of the King Chamber of Commerce and she helped organize Christmas in King.

The efforts of many members of the Nobleton Old Timers hockey league were in the spotlight. They were recognized for the actions taken on Dec. 8, 2016 to save the life of their teammate Earl Keen, by administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and using the automated external defibrillator (AED) located at the Nobleton arena. Their compassion and joint effort resulting in saving a life is truly remarkable. Brett Delmas and Stan Wos were on hand to accept award on behalf of the Nobleton Old Timers.

A surprised and teary-eyed Rebecca Eveson received her special recognition. She created the 'We Believe in Abby' campaign in support of her daughter Abby, raising money for Sick Children's Hospital and local families in need of assistance. Time and again, despite their challenges, the Evesons have always 'paid it forward.' 'Your dedication and positive energy is truly remarkable.'

The Senior Citizen Award of Merit is an award given to a senior citizen to recognize and honor special contributions to the senior population.

Recipient Joanne Hofstetter is an active member with the King City Seniors' Centre; a member of the Schomberg Horticultural Society; supporter of King for Refugees, as well as a volunteer with Hospice King-Aurora.

The Youth Award of Merit is an award given to a younger citizen to recognize special contributions .

Noah Subedar is a dedicated and committed volunteer with the King City Library, assisting with youth programs.