

King's volunteers shine at recognition night

By Mark Pavilons

The contributions of hundreds of community-minded volunteers made last Thursday "an extremely special day in King," according to Mayor Steve Pellegrini. In fact, it's his number-one perk.

King Township's staff of roughly 100 oversee a large geographic municipality with limited resources. It's the army of volunteers who always rise to the occasion and help make King the gem that it is.

A packed house at the Kingbridge Centre was on hand to praise the tireless efforts of King's volunteers and community groups, during the annual Community Showcase and Volunteer Appreciation Night.

Mayor Pellegrini noted success in life is directly proportional to what we give back. The auditorium was filled with people who've known that, and lived it, for decades.

"We need you people and we value you people," he said. Without our volunteers there simply wouldn't be the abundance of sports, culture and social services in King.

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

King councillors and staff were equally thrilled to be on hand to praise their volunteers.

Ward 1 Councillor Cleve Mortelliti said it weren't for the efforts of volunteers of his parents' generation, he wouldn't have enjoyed sports growing up in King City.

A sense of community that flows from our volunteers is what King Township was built on. He encouraged everyone to bring their interests, energy and enthusiasm to community endeavours. Volunteers are not a luxury "King depends on them."

Councillor Peter Grandilli thanked the legion of volunteers, encouraging them to entice their friends and neighbours to volunteer as well. He reiterated the fact that volunteers save the Township a lot of money.

"You are the heart and soul of King," veteran Councillor Linda Pabst told the crowd. She also praised King's volunteer firefighters who risk their lives to protect residents.

King's "social capital" is immeasurable, according to Councillor Bill Cober. The leadership which volunteers provide enriches the lives of all residents, and Cober was pleased to see two new Schomberg groups added to the long list this year "the Schomberg Youth Group and Schomberg Community Farm."

Councillor Debbie Schaefer finds the amount of collaboration among community groups in King wonderful. She offered her heart-felt thanks. "We're all much better off because of it," she said.

During her first term of office, Councillor Avia Eek has met some incredible people. She's pleased with the amount of agricultural groups that thrive in King. In her emotional tribute, she said we "can't forget the people in our communities."

Citizen of the Year

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Citizen of Year.

This year's recipient is long-time Nobleton resident Peggy Belcher.

Belcher has a long history of service with the Girl Guides of Canada, the group that nominated her. Her dedication and community involvement has been shown through Stewardship at Cold Creek Conservation Area, King Curling Club and All Saints Anglican Church.

In her speech, Belcher said it was a bit of a coincidence that they happened to move to Nobleton so many years ago.

A lucky coincidence led her to Guiding in King and York. Her children were baptized at All Saints and after years of Guiding outings at Cold Creek, she returned to become one of its stewards.

Coincidences may have led her here, but it was people, and the many opportunities, that kept her involved.

"I can't thank them enough for the past 40 years," she said. There have been many amazing opportunities and she's met some great friends along the way. Her family, and husband Bob, have been her foundation.

Lifetime Achievement

The long-time generosity and dedication of Dalt Hicks earned him the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Hicks has been donor and ambassador to both the Mackenzie Health Centre and Southlake hospital. He's served on various boards

and industry committees. He was founder of Gormley Aggregates and he's been the welcoming host as owner of Canada's largest golf course ??Cardinal Golf Club.

Youth Merit Awards

Alessandra Benazzi was presented with the Youth Award of Merit for her work in the Leaders in Training program and volunteer work with young campers within King's Parks, Recreation and Culture Department.

Phillip Charitou was given his award for assisting emergent readers and children through the King Township Public Library Reading Buddies program.

Senior Citizen Award of Merit

Through many years of involvement with Laskay Hall as co-chair and treasurer, Alan Henderson earned the Senior Citizen Award of Merit. He's also supported the church choir and other committees for many years.

Special Recognition

Seven individuals and groups were honoured for Special Recognition Awards.

Dion Bowman has dedicated his time and efforts to the King United Soccer Club, serving as volunteer and president, spending countless hours promoting the club. He's helped improve access to the fields and given the club a solid footing.

Robert Dennis was recognized for his many years of involvement with the Township's Committee of Adjustment. His enthusiasm and true leadership to his committee members is very much admired.

The Dufferin Marsh Committee, a group of steadfast stewards of this valuable resource, was also recognized. They've been working to preserve and enhance the Marsh since 1989 and several members of the group were on hand.

Danny Macedo, outgoing president of NobleKing Minor Hockey was praised, and given a cheer from local hockey players. He served as volunteer, manager and president. He has also spent many hours assisting the Sacred Heart Parish as eucharist minister.

Randy Miller, long-time supporter of Schomberg Minor Hockey, was also honoured. He's served as volunteer, head coach, trainer, manager, tournament director, etc. He also coached softball in Schomberg and volunteers with Beavers and Scouts.

Farmer Doug Weening has helped his neighbours and other farmers with harvesting their crops and offering a helping hand. He exemplifies what a true community is all about.

Andrew MacPherson is a familiar face around King. He's been involved with the Schomberg Agricultural Society, Fair, Farmers' Market. He's been a solid supporter of the Schomberg Youth Club and member of Nobleton United Church.