

Volunteers receive praise for their efforts at appreciation night



By Mark Pavilons

King's volunteers were recognized for their selfless commitment to the community last week. King Township, council and the community gathered to pay tribute to these special people at the annual Volunteer Appreciation Night. This year, there were a record number of nominations, attesting to the tireless efforts of volunteers. Mayor Steve Pellegrini noted his favourite night of the year honours one of our most important resources: volunteers. "Without them King Township would be a very different place. First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to each one of our volunteers. Your selflessness and dedication to making our community a better place is truly commendable. Whether it's volunteering at local schools, hospitals, non-profit organizations, shelters, or other community initiatives, you have made a positive impact on the lives of countless individuals. I would also like to extend my appreciation to the families and friends of our volunteers. Your support and encouragement have been instrumental in enabling our volunteers to give their time and resources to the community. Your understanding and sacrifices have allowed our volunteers to make a difference in the lives of others, and we are deeply grateful for your unwavering support. Volunteers are the heart and soul of any community. Your willingness to step up and make a difference, without any expectation of recognition or reward, is a testament to your incredible generosity and kindness. You have embodied the spirit of giving back and have set an exemplary standard for others to follow. Your actions have made our community a more caring and compassionate place to live. Volunteering is not just about helping others; it also has personal benefits. It can provide a sense of purpose, fulfillment and personal growth. It allows you to connect with like-minded individuals, learn new skills, and gain valuable experiences. Your commitment to volunteering demonstrates your deep-rooted values and commitment to creating a better world for all. The mayor cited data from Statistics Canada that says roughly 1 in 2 Canadians aged 15 and over donate their time, energy and skills to charities and non-profit organizations. The approximately 2 billion volunteer hours they contribute is equivalent to more than 1 million full-time jobs. Can you imagine the impact to our economy and society in general if those volunteers stopped tomorrow? He's fortunate to meet many local citizens donating their time. And although they may volunteer in many different ways, they all have one thing in common - they obviously love what they do. Councillor David Boyd relayed a story of one of the special recipients, Bob Phillips, and his decades-long contributions to the community. Volunteers, he said, have direct and indirect impacts and while they appear humble, they are very deserving of recognition. Councillor Jennifer Anstey encouraged everyone to get involved in their community and there are plenty of ways to do this. She noted volunteering was a springboard to her interest in running for council. Councillor Mary Asselstine said recognizing volunteers is "the right thing to do. You represent thousands of others who care," she said. Councillor Debbie Schaefer said the awards night is an "energizing evening," pointing to the priceless value of our volunteers. Their efforts are far-reaching and often inspire and energize others. Councillor Avia Eek noted several qualities that make up a volunteer: "generosity, understanding, empathy, compassion, patience and dedication. The volunteers have shown these qualities, and so much more," she said.

Special Recognition Award

This award is given to citizens or an organization for a special contribution made to the community. There were 15 recipients this year. Beverly Berger was honoured for her dedication and commitment to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) for over 10 years. Her devotion and leadership to her community have truly been an inspiration to all. Bob Belcher was given the award for his dedicated effort and time to the King Curling Club in both getting it started and sitting as a previous board member. He's spent countless hours helping to maintain and improve the ice conditions, the equipment, train volunteers and spearheading the "Family Day" curling event for King Township residents. In September 2022, the King Curling Club faced challenges with opening season potentially being cancelled. With only a few days' notice, he devised a plan to find a solution. His dedication to the King Curling Club is truly appreciated. Fiona Macrae, Llian Macrae and Gerladine Alletson were honoured for their involvement and dedication to Kettleby and Christ Church, Christmas in King (King Township Food Bank), Open Doors King (King Historical Society), Canada Day in Kettleby Park, Kettleby Fair, Christ Church Kettleby's Women's Guild Spring and Fall Teas, activities of Kettleby Village Association. As well, this team wrote, edited, and published a valuable and iconic representation of the character, stories and peoples of Kettleby Village and its Christ Church. Gillian Watt was recognized for as a member of Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT) for over 30 years, serving in various capacities including member chair. Her tireless efforts to protect the natural heritage features of King Township and promote sustainability have made a significant impact on the community. Her contributions have left a lasting impact and will continue to inspire others for years to come. Gino and Susan DiFebo were praised for their dedication, effort and time to the Nobleton community by volunteering at the Nobleton United Church, helping the King Curling Club with ice maintenance, bartending, food preparation and bonspiels, as well as assisting neighbours during snowstorms by cleaning laneways. Ian Hilley was recognized for his dedicated time and leadership to Kingscross Estates serving as secretary of the Kingscross Estates Ratepayers Association (KRA) since 2015. As well, he is involved with King for Refugees, is a volunteer and board member for CHATS and president for the Canadian Hemochromatosis Society. King for Refugees was honoured for its tremendous efforts and contributions by assisting 30 newcomers from different parts of the world to reside in King. The group has raised the funds necessary to sponsor a family for a year, guide and support the families toward financial independence, secure accommodations, clothing, furniture and food, meet the new families at the airport, actively assist the families with their settlement needs including registration for school and English classes, provide social and emotional support, just to name a few. Linda Pabst was praised for her involvement in bringing ambulance service to Nobleton and King City, volunteering with EMS for over 16 years and serving as a King councillor for 24 years. After retiring as a councillor in 2018, she began contributing your expertise to the Accessibility and Advisory Committee, which has been invaluable to its success. Mary Muter received recognition for her active interest and advocacy for the natural heritage and wetlands of King's rural environment. She is chair of the Georgian Bay Great Lakes Foundation, and has generously shared her knowledge and expertise about the importance of protecting our green space. In addition, she's generously contributed her time as a member of Concerned Citizens of King Township (CCKT), Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT), Save The Oak Ridges Moraine Coalition (STORM), and dedicating much of your time representing the interests of Kingscross Estate residents for the past 10 years as director and several years as chairperson of Kingscross Ratepayers Association. Meline Beach was honoured for her efforts with the King Township Food Bank as a volunteer. She joined the board in the role of secretary and expanding the role to include social media communications, organizing the highly successful Sip and Savour fundraiser, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the Food Bank's needs. Her passion and commitment have helped the Food Bank grow in countless ways. Michele McNally was lauded for her contributions as president of Arts Society King; sourcing major grants and donations, starting new projects which have expanded the character of art and cultural events in the community. Her interest in creating partnerships with arts groups outside of King and her bond with the King Heritage and Cultural Centre have enriched both organizations as well as arts and culture in King. The Schomberg Horticultural Society was honoured its efforts in the community. Since its inception on April 12, 1935, it has been an integral part of King Township through its promotion and protection of the environment, good gardening practices, tree plantings, public beautification, and educational materials, organizing competitions, exhibits, field trips, contests, and awards, as well as its care of numerous gardens around Schomberg and the annual Garden Tour that takes place on the last Sunday in June. Susan Hayhoe was singled out for her involvement with the Nobleton Pool Committee, Nobleton Skating Club as well as being an integral part of the Nobleton Tennis Club. In addition to volunteerism in King Township, she has been part of the Young Mother's Group in Toronto acting as a support and mentor to young single mothers. Last fall, she was recognized for 25 years of service to the group. The Special Recognition Award - Non Resident is given to those who volunteer in King but live outside the municipality. Janice Gervais was honoured for her work with the King Township Food Bank's fundraiser Sip and Savour for the past six years, as well as her involvement with the

King Curling Club community supporting various fundraising initiatives, including raising funds for the purchase of an accessible vehicle for a King resident. Kathleen Rodgers received her award for her time volunteering with Arts Society King (ASK) since 2018 and as a director on the board since 2020. She's assisted in organizing member art exhibitions; was instrumental in bringing the International Women's Day exhibits to the King Heritage and Cultural Centre, and sits on the Exhibitions Committee at the King Heritage and Cultural Centre. Mark Pavilons, Editor of the King Weekly Sentinel, was honoured for his efforts as a long-time volunteer of the King Township Food Bank. He has dedicated countless hours of service and made significant contributions, including being an MC for the annual Sip and Savour fundraisers, as well as regularly promoting the Food Bank's activities and events through the King Weekly Sentinel. Recipients who were not able to attend the event included Brenda See, Joe D'Ercole and Sharlene Maietta.

Senior Citizen Award of Merit

The Senior Citizen Award of Merit is an award given to a senior citizen of the Township of King to recognize and honour special contributions to the senior populations. Robert Phillips was honoured for his efforts with the Nobleton Lions Club, as a Member since 2009 and as past president from 2011-2014. He has been an integral part of the club's success. His professional experience, enthusiasm, generosity, and unyielding commitment to community service is truly admired.

Lifetime Achievement

The Lifetime Achievement Award is an award recognizes outstanding citizenship within the community. Louise Di Iorio received the honour for her involvement in several heritage organizations, sitting on the boards of the King Township Historical Society for 8 years, the Heritage Advisory Committee for 10 years and currently the King Township Museum Board. Wendy Sue Bishop was honoured for her work as the marshal for the annual Main Street Christmas Parade in Schomberg for the past 6 years and the voice of Schomberg with her weekly update in the King Weekly Sentinel for over 30 years. In addition, she helped organize the parade of lights that was held at the fairgrounds during the pandemic.

Youth Award of Merit

The Youth Award of Merit is given to a younger citizen to recognize special contributions. Julia Tabrizi was recognized for her time supporting young members of the community in strengthening their reading and literacy skills through the King Township Public Library Reading Buddies Program. Noa Brook was praised for her work with the Mayor's Youth Action Team and taking on the position of chair. She has taken on other volunteer initiatives by organizing a group to clean a public pond in King, coordinated a school fundraiser for the Vaughan animal shelter as well as teaching English to Ukrainian refugees. Paul O'Neill volunteers with the Leaders In Training program for summer camps at the Township of King. He volunteered for 8 weeks at the King City Arena, leading campers through games, activities and helping with the lunch program. He has been an excellent leader and has built great relationships with the campers and counsellors. Zoran Ouslis volunteered as a camp counsellor with the Township of King in 2021, acting as a volunteer mentor for younger high school students at King City Secondary School. He also volunteered to tutor students in Physics and Mathematics, volunteered with the Reading Buddies Program, and is currently enrolled in the Math Buddies Program.

Citizen of the Year

The Citizen of the Year Award is an award given to a citizen to recognize and honor outstanding contributions to the Township of King. This year's award went to Angelo Santorelli. He was praised for his special dedication, generosity and time to the community as a long-time resident, proud business owner and president of Trisan Construction, member of the King Chamber of Commerce for over 10 years, including president since 2019, as well as his participation and involvement in the Township's Sustainability Advisory Committee. You have helped bring businesses together and have been involved in creating a stronger and better community for all who live and seek to thrive in our Township. As a 40-year resident, thank you for calling King your home. On behalf of Council and the Residents of King, your exceptional dedication and commitment to your community is truly inspiring and appreciated. Mayor Pellegrini said in introducing Santorelli. The soft-spoken Santorelli, a long-time King resident, had nothing but praise for the

community and King Township. Getting involved is really important he said, noting he's enjoyed all the years of sharing with the community. His interest and commitment to the community is solid, and he's been lucky to have had the support from his family, the majority of whom all live here.