

Dufferin women sparkle during business awards gala]

By JAMES MATTHEWS

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Women in the Dufferin County business community shone at the Sparkle Awards Gala after a pandemic-caused shutdown of the in-person event.

This year was the 11th edition of the event to recognize the contributions of women to the local community. Hosted by the Dufferin Women in Business organization, award recipients were announced during an evening gala November 24 at the Monora Park Pavilion.

The event was also a means to mark the two-decade anniversary of the Dufferin Women in Business organization.

The annual woman of influence is a woman in the Dufferin business community who has used her skills and influence to promote local businesses, especially those run by women and remains committed to high standards and ethics in her business practice.

Newly minted Orangeville Mayor Lisa Post was named the 2022 Woman of Influence.

The award was sponsored by Nada St. Germain-NeoLife. At the time of nomination, Post was a Town Councillor and a community volunteer.

The volunteer of the year is a woman in the Dufferin business community who participates on a volunteer basis at local charities, non-profit organizations, and events for the betterment of others and the community.

Bobbi Ferguson, who volunteers with the Rotary Club of Shelburne, Shelburne Christmas Hampers, and Mobile Seniors Market received the Volunteer of the Year Award sponsored by Oxygen Yoga & Fitness Orangeville.

The county's mentor of the year is a woman in the Dufferin business community deemed to have used her skills and experience to lend a hand to entrepreneurs and new and growing businesses to increase their likelihood of success.

Terry Doel of Lavender Blue Catering got kudos for Mentor of the Year. That award was sponsored by Hereward Farms.

The networker of the year is a woman who participates in local networking groups and events and understands that building relationships with others is the key to success.

Nanci Malek at the Museum of Dufferin earned the Networker of the Year Award, sponsored by Town of Orangeville.

Teena Avery, chairperson of the Dufferin Women in Business, said the awards were last given in-person in 2019 before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequent editions were online affairs.

The award process begins with nominations. The nominees then submit answers to three or four questions for blind judging by a voting committee of a handful of people.

The submissions from nominees are numbered and their names are redacted before the committee votes.

Avery said there is a misconception that stems from use of the word sparkle in the awards' moniker. It isn't that the awards are for women and women like things that sparkle, she said.

?Some may even take offence to the name of the award and event based on this misconception,? Avery said. ?The truth is that all humans sparkle.?

She said the name is a symbolic meaning of prosperity, strength, harmony, purity and peace.

From the organization's website: ?We encourage everyone to be the diamond in their rough and be the best they can be.?