

On Volunteers and Awards Season

by SHERALYN ROMAN

It's the talk of the town and if it isn't the talk of the town it certainly should be!

I'm not referring to the myriad of award shows that swept through Hollywood recently, including the Oscars and that ?slap heard around the world?; rather I'm talking about our very own awards season right here in Caledon.

For the first time in several years, we're about to experience an in-person awards ceremony and the celebrations are for a great reason, to acknowledge the hard work of the many wonderful volunteers in the Caledon community!

On April 25, the Mayor and Council are inviting both the nominees and their nominators to a special event at the Albion Bolton Community Centre. The Community Recognition Awards are an opportunity for the Town and the residents of Caledon to thank those citizens who make a difference in our community each and every day and in a variety of ways. From sports to heritage work, community events to arts and culture, and environmental efforts to social services, these are the people who go above and beyond, solely for the purposes of making Caledon a better place to live, work and play. These are residents who have ?made a significant impact,? and it's fitting they are being honoured during National Volunteer Week.

We have spent some time in this space several times in the past discussing kindness, opportunities to give back to the community and the importance of volunteering and being of service to others. It has never been more important than over these past two and half years when so many are reeling from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and when basic human kindness has occasionally been missing in action. That there are good people who are still striving to do so much for others is worthy of a celebration indeed. As well, let's also not forget that while we celebrate the nominees, there are many, many other community members who quietly go about making a difference in someone's day with little fanfare and who might not necessarily win an award for their efforts.

We see you nonetheless and know how hard you work. We see others too ? the people that work behind the scenes to support the front-facing volunteer. This might even include family members who take on extra duties at home so that a spouse might give of their time. Thanks to each and every one of you as well!

This year, National Volunteer Week takes place from April 24 ? 30 and the theme is ?Empathy In Action.? I am particularly fond of the reasoning behind the choice of the word empathy and find it fitting after all we have experienced, including the dramatic events of the convoy situation that occurred in Ottawa mere weeks ago.

Volunteer Canada reminds us that: ?Empathy is a quality that can help people relate to others and build awareness around different experiences. It connects people?.and helps create bonds.? Further, they add ?Volunteering can help us develop empathy, to see the world through the eyes of others?expanding our views?[and allows us to] contribute to a vibrant, inclusive society.?

I believe it is this we need now more than ever before. An expanded point of view that recognizes how each of us has fared differently throughout this pandemic and that fosters a level of understanding of the impact of those experiences. Together, understanding and empathy help fuel volunteers and volunteers help fuel community. Thanks to every volunteer who adds ?heart to Canada's communities.?

I'm sad that I'll be missing the festivities this year. In the past it has always been a lovely event and a wonderful opportunity to meet both new and old friends. The fact that it is the first time in several years the awards will be hosted live is great news.

Speaking of great news, it's my privilege to leave the last word to our esteemed and honourable Mayor, Allan Thompson. ?It's hard to put into words without it sounding like a cliché but volunteers really are the heart and soul of a community. On Monday April 25th Town Council will recognize and honour the contributions of extraordinary residents who care, who give and who quite

honestly SHINE?!