

Volunteer MBC hands out V-Oscars to those who contribute in the community

By Bill Rea

Volunteers make major contributions to life in Peel Region, and it was time to recognize that recently.

Volunteer MBC hosted the V-Oscars in Mississauga to recognize the contributions of various groups and individuals, and Caledon was well represented at the ceremonies.

There were various categories of awards, and in some cases, there were three winners, representing each of the three municipalities in Peel.

In the Corporate Engagement Awards, sponsored by Mayor Allan Thompson and Councillor Jennifer Innis, the Caledon winner was the Bolton branch of Scotiabank.

The Caledon winner of the Helping Hands Award, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Palgrave, as well as clubs in Brampton and Mississauga, went to Madeleine Adams of Caledon Community Services (CCS).

Kelly Towsley of CCS was the winner of the Leader in Volunteer Engagement Award, sponsored by Volunteer MBC Board member Arno Ilic.

Christina Radice of CCS was nominated for the Lifetime Volunteer Achievement Award, sponsored by Brampton Brick. It went to Antoinette Allen of Supportive Housing Peel.

Debbie Davis of Bethell Hospice and Michael Ortolan of the Bolton Braves Baseball Association were up for the Bonnie Yagar Award for Community Engagement Leadership, but it was won by Shelley White of Community Door.

Bonnie McTaggart of CCS was nominated for the John Huether Award for Volunteering excellence, but it went to Donna Madill of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel.

Former Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion was on hand to present the Power of Giving Award named after her to Brampton resident Lois Rice.

The recipient was surprised at the selection.

"I'm in shock, and very honoured," she said in accepting it.

MC Board member Jake Dheer of Rogers Media Inc., president of the Volunteer MBC Board, pointed out a lot of work has to go into what the agency does.

"This is such a dedicated staff," he declared. "I'm so blessed to work with this wonderful group."

"All of us are sent here for a reason," Volunteer MBC Executive Director Carine Strong said as she described her motivation for volunteering. "We're all blessed with very unique gifts."

She added volunteers exemplify what community spirit is all about, observing that helping others is empowering and has an impact. She also pointed out that without volunteers, a lot of essential services that seniors, young people and families depend on might not be available.

"It takes just one person to make a difference," Strong said. "You all get it."

"You have all touched people in a very special way," she added.

"Volunteering has so many benefits," Strong remarked, commenting that research indicates volunteering leads to better health. "The bottom line is if you do good, you feel good."

"What a gathering!" McCallion declared as she addressed the room and marvelled at the great experiences that were represented. McCallion pointed out the country was founded by volunteers, and reflected on the organizations that have operated through the years because of volunteers.

She observed there are professional sports today because coaches volunteered to work with young athletes and help them excel.

McCallion added Mississauga has the Living Arts Centre because a group of volunteers got together to create it. The arena in Streetsville is still run by volunteers, and she said it has never needed tax dollars to operate.

She also said volunteers help museums operate economically.

"I have to tell you when government takes it over, it becomes more costly to run," she observed.

McCallion also said a volunteer is a happier person, as opposed to those who sit watching the news on TV and get depressed by what they see.

"If you're out volunteering, you're not listening to that horrible news report," she commented.

As well, she too made the point that volunteering is good for people's health.

"If you're out volunteering, you forget you've got something wrong with you," she remarked.

She added one thing she enjoyed doing in her time as mayor was presenting certificates of appreciation to volunteers. But she

observed there's really no way to thank these people enough.

?There are no words that can express the thanks they should receive,? she commented.

Citizenship and Immigration Minister Laura Albanese pointed out that volunteers help out in all sorts of areas.

?They don't get paid,? she added. ?They don't ask to get paid.?

?There's no way to thank them enough,? she added ?The world would not be the same without them.?

?It makes our job easier when you've got community volunteers,? Thompson commented.



Volunteer MBC?Board member Arno Ilic presented the Leader in Volunteer Engagement Award to Kelly Towsley.



Volunteer MBC?Executive Director Carine Strong commented on the many benefits of volunteering.



The Bolton branch of Scotiabank won a Corporate Engagement Award. On hand for the presentation was Volunteer MBC?Board member Arno Ilic, branch Manager Frank Macellaio, Mayor Allan Thompson, Councillor Jennifer Innis and Rosa Evangelista and Sharon Sarini of Scotiabank.



Palgrave Rotarians Janet and Derek Clark were talking with Caledon resident Jane Scognamillo, a member of Volunteer MBC's Events Committee.



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