

Lanark County presents 2014 Awards of Excellence

Lanark County Council honoured a Tay Valley Township resident with a 2014 Award of Excellence during a presentation as part of the regular council meeting Wednesday evening.

The award recognizes and honours citizens or organizations that have made a significant and/or extraordinary contribution to Lanark County. This year Cheryl Nash was recognized in the Business/Agriculture/Industry/Tourism category.

"These awards celebrate people who give freely of their time and who promote our county and continue to make it such a wonderful place to live," said Warden Richard Kidd (Beckwith reeve). "Since the start of the program, we have seen many examples of local citizens and organizations that have made a big difference in the lives of others. Through actions large and small, we have role models at work in Lanark County."

The program began in 2005 as a way to recognize recipients for contributions to the county at large or in at least two municipalities. It was developed to say thank you to citizens of Lanark County, to provide community recognition and visibility, to support citizens for their contributions and to inspire further community service.

Ms. Nash was nominated by the Township of Beckwith for her contributions to the agricultural economy by bringing farmers and consumers together throughout Lanark County with a "Buy Local" movement that has created a long-term spinoff related to healthy communities and economic growth for garden farmers.

"Cheryl's goals around local food are a real passion for her, as can be seen in her calls for action," the nomination indicated, noting such activities as meet-and-greet events to bring together commercial consumers and producers, the "Get Fresh with Lanark Local Flavours" initiative that provides info about food and farming and highlights producers and farm gate sales, and her efforts to provide support and coordination to a number of different organizations, including the Eastern Ontario Local Food Collaborative and others interested in local food issues throughout the region.

Ms. Nash is a founding member on the board of directors for ecoPerth, a member of the Lanark County Agricultural Advisory Committee and a member of the organizing committee for the Lanark County Harvest Festival, which formed in 2013.

"The Harvest Festival is an annual event that celebrates local food by hosting a super famers' market, speakers' series and buy-local cooking demonstrations," the nomination indicated. "Cheryl played a key role connecting the committee with local producers and encouraging their participation in this first-time event."

She has also played a major role in the development of the Two Rivers Food Hub. Thanks to a combination of provincial legislation, grants, the availability of the kitchen and storage facilities at the Gallipeau Centre in Smiths Falls, and Ms. Nash's coordination of local producers and consumers, the food hub is expected to be open by the end of this year. Its goal is to increase local food production, provide processors with local resources for preserving and baking, and provide buyers with a place to purchase local food, which has positive environmental effects by reducing transportation costs.

In a letter of support for the nomination, ecoPerth chair Janet Duncan described Ms. Nash's extensive work in the Slow Food movement, as well as with ecoPerth, an award-winning incorporated not-for-profit agency that has been working on climate change projects and local food initiatives since 1998.

"Cheryl Nash is the prime volunteer coordinator of local food activities and has focused her efforts on supporting farmer activities and other organizations thorough numerous projects."

Ray Elgersma, who is with the food hub, also submitted a letter of support and commented on Ms. Nash's enormous contributions to that project. "The intent is to 'mainstream local food,' and that is going to happen thanks in large part to Cheryl's vision, tenacity and drive....While this has been a community effort with many volunteer hours given by numerous persons, Cheryl has been the spark plug that has kept the group fired up and the gatepost on which much of the committee activity has swung."

He added she has given tirelessly throughout this past year to see the concept realized for Lanark County. "She does this because she believes it is in the interest of this county and the health and well-being of its residents to have this."

Warden Kidd thanked Ms. Nash for her passion to serve the community and to keep it healthy. "The food hub is truly a legacy project as it has the potential to help not only our local farmers, but everyone who lives here. Cheryl is to be commended for her hard work on making the food hub a reality," he said. "She was a great candidate for this award because her work involves the whole county. It can be difficult to find someone to celebrate who contributes to all of Lanark County."

Ms. Nash thanked the Township of Beckwith and her supporters (Cassandra McGregor, Ray Elgersma and Janet Duncan) for the nomination. "I am truly and deeply honoured to receive this award today," she said. "I hope that next year at the Warden's Banquet we will have food supplied by the Two Rivers Food Hub." She added the organization expects to announce the hiring of their general manager next week.

Awards of Excellence recipients receive an individually designed award commissioned by Mississippi Mills-area artist Stephen Braithwaite, who also created the stained glass windows in the council chambers. They will be recognized on a plaque in the county administration building, as well as on the county website at www.lanarkcounty.ca and in notices in local newspapers.

The 2013 award recipient was the 2012 World Broomball Championships Host Committee in the Business/Recreation/Sports and Tourism category, and James (Jim) Lowry in the Agriculture/Business/Community Service and Volunteerism category.

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For more information, please contact:

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Presentation photos available at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/g1c92v3jcsH9lzp/AADD1Jo0Araj1F1d2T-sR3yha?dl=0>