

Warden presents 2015 Awards of Excellence

Two Tay Valley Township residents were honoured at the regular council meeting Wednesday evening as part of the 2015 Awards of Excellence for their outstanding contributions to Lanark County, particularly related to their work on a unique historical mapping project in partnership with CGIS, four municipalities and Algonquin College.

The Awards of Excellence recognize and honour citizens or organizations that have made a significant and/or extraordinary contribution to Lanark County. This year council recognized Barrie Crampton and Ann MacPhail in the categories of heritage and volunteerism.

“Since the Awards of Excellence program began 10 years ago, we have had the opportunity to honour many individuals and groups who have given their time and talent to help make Lanark County a great place to live,” said Warden Keith Kerr (Tay Valley Reeve). “We are celebrating role models and community builders who make a difference in the lives of others.”

The program began 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.

Mr. Crampton and Ms. MacPhail are key players in the historical mapping project, which tells the settlement story through digital mapping technology and uses original survey maps from 1815 to show the settlement of the soldiers and settlers by lot and concession, along with original and subsequent families and their stories.

Susan Freeman, past chair and current volunteer on the Tay Valley 200th Anniversary Committee, wrote a letter of support for Mr. Crampton’s nomination. “It takes a vision, a love of history and knowledge of GIS technology to have the concept and give birth to the idea of customized maps of our townships,” she wrote of this lifelong volunteer “whose tireless efforts on this project are not only going to benefit the residents of our municipalities, but also researchers looking up their family histories and future generations looking at the history and the founding of our country.”

Mr. Crampton has made numerous volunteer contributions over decades in Lanark County. He has worked with the county’s emergency services as the Emergency Coordinator of Lanark, North Leeds Amateur Radio Emergency Service Inc. (ARES), which played a major role during the Ice Storm of 1998, including technical support to the military. Through ARES he has been involved with local students in high-altitude balloon tracking experiments and to assist with communications during major local events.

He pitched the Lanark County Community Computer Access Program that saw computers placed in local libraries, community and municipal halls for the public to use in anticipation of an increased need for Internet access.

“Barrie’s community spirit and his drive to blend technology for public good and use has truly benefitted all of Lanark County,” Ms. Freeman said.

In addition to these achievements, Tay Valley Township Planner Noelle Reeve also noted Mr. Crampton’s work related to the Eastern Ontario Regional Network broadband Internet project to improve connectivity in Lanark County.

“The mapping project would not have happened without a champion who had a particular combination of interests and skill set: an interest in history and maps and an understanding of the possibilities of innovative technology to bring the history of the area to life through an online interactive experience,” she said.

Letters of support were also received from Perth CAO John deRosenroll, Beckwith Executive Assistant Cassandra McGregor, representatives from ARES, and the Perth & District Historical Society, which called the historical mapping project “an invaluable history research tool” that “offers major economic opportunity in the promotion of genealogical tourism to the area.”

“Mr. Crampton’s contributions to Lanark County in terms of his immense technological knowledge are well known to this council,” Warden Kerr said. “I would like to express our gratitude for the time you have taken to bring this knowledge to our residents and visitors to the county in very practical ways. The mapping project has the potential to be a true legacy for all of Lanark County.”

Ms. MacPhail, who has been employed as the librarian at Algonquin College’s Perth campus for 20 years, was nominated by the 200th Anniversary Drummond/North Elmsley Committee. In her career she has provided extensive research support to individuals and organizations seeking historical reference documentation about Lanark County.

For the historical mapping project, Ms. MacPhail has served as the key land records researcher for the team. She researches the original land records for each of the four municipalities. She has transcribed more than 8,100 handwritten entries from microfilm reels into an Excel spreadsheet to create text entries for the mapping. This, her nominators indicate, is “the foundation of the project and forms the most comprehensive searchable Lanark County records database that we know to exist.”

The project may eventually be expanded to include other municipalities within the county. “The online internet-based project will become a significant online application to support genealogical tourism and has already provided information to families from away that intend to attend celebration festivities in 2016,” the nomination states.

In a letter of support, local resident Sarah Edmundson detailed Ms. MacPhail’s efforts to assist her son with his Perth Regional Heritage Fair project and how it evolved into an exploration of the history of their property. “Ann’s enthusiasm and knowledge was infectious and brought to life Nye’s hunt through history....Ann’s knowledge and curation of these valuable documents is inspiring.”

Ms. Freeman also wrote a letter of support and noted Ms. MacPhail has “over the past few years helped to develop a legacy that not only is significant to Beckwith, Drummond, North Elmsley, Tay Valley and the Town of Perth, but to the whole of Lanark County and other counties.” She noted the

project gives a modern context to the historical origins of our ancestors' land and has taken hundreds of volunteer hours.

A letter of support was also provided by the Perth & District Historical Society, who hailed Ms. MacPhail as "one of the most important resources of history and genealogical information for this region, by virtue of her knowledge of the sector and of the related technical sources of historical records. This expertise has made the Algonquin College archives, and Ms. MacPhail, one of the essential stops to which our society directs incoming researchers of these sectors from all parts of the world."

Drummond/North Elmsley Township Planner Karl Grenke supported both nominations and noted the countless hours invested in the historical mapping project, which he called "an enduring resource for the areas of the Perth Military Settlement."

Warden Kerr thanked Ms. MacPhail for the countless hours she has spent helping residents and visitors to become acquainted with the history of Lanark County. "Your dedication to helping people to understand our past and your commitment to preserving and promoting our historic records has not gone unnoticed. Congratulations and thank you for sharing your talent and passion with all of us."

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 2014 award recipient was Cheryl Nash in the Business/Agriculture/Industry/Tourism category.

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For more information, please contact:

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Presentation photos available at

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/v1vr8q9awyw9nwj/AAAXZNuT8qCMxGXSqmNRTzB3a?dl=0>