

Warden presents 2016 Awards of Excellence

Two residents and one organization were honoured at the regular council meeting Wednesday evening as part of the 2016 Awards of Excellence for their outstanding contributions to Lanark County that have enhanced quality of life and left lasting legacies.

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 Colin Stephenson of Tay Valley in the category of Community Service / Volunteerism / Youth, the Smiths Falls Flying Club for Business / Heritage / Recreation / Tourism / Volunteerism, and David Taylor of Tay Valley in Heritage and Ecology.

“For more than a decade, these awards have given us the chance to see how recipients affect others in a positive way,” said Warden Gail Code (Drummond/North Elmsley Deputy Reeve). “Their actions, big and small, are often done quietly behind the scenes, but today we can shine a light on them to thank them and show their efforts have not gone unnoticed.”

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.

Since retiring to Glen Tay in 2004 after a career with the Bank of Canada, Perth native Colin Stephenson has immersed himself in numerous organizations. He has helped fledgling groups to succeed by developing long-term investment strategies, policies, procedures and websites, and by demonstrating how to seek donors and sponsors. The Perth and District Community Foundation, Friends of the Tay Watershed, the Community Alliance for Refugee Resettlement (CARR) and the Perth Probus Club have all been beneficiaries of Mr. Stephenson’s talents.

In addition to engaging youth in environmental stewardship and the preservation of local history, Mr. Stephenson also played a significant role with CARR to bring two Syrian families to the area last year and is working to reunite two others with family in 2017. As well, in true Maple Syrup Capital of Ontario fashion, Mr. Stephenson volunteers as one of the “Kettle Boys,” making maple syrup each spring at Fortune Farms Maple Sugar Bush and at Ottawa’s Winterlude using traditional iron kettles.

Mr. Stephenson was nominated by Gordon and Ann Munroe. “Not only does he contribute extensively to Lanark County, he provides wise counsel and supports his colleagues with grace and humility,” they said.

Mr. Stephenson also received letters of support from the Friends of the Tay Watershed Association, The Perth and District Community Foundation, the CARR, the Probus Club of Perth, the Stewart Park Festival, Ray Fortune and Richard Schooley.

The Smiths Falls Flying Club has a 59-year history of supporting the Russ Beach-Smiths Falls-Montague Airport and has played a key role in its development through numerous programs, services

and activities. It started a flight school, runs an annual fly-in breakfast, has hosted air shows, provides glider training for local air cadet squadrons and conducts other events that benefit the community. The annual Race the Runway event contributes financially to Big Brother Big Sisters of Lanark County, the Youth Action Committee in Perth and provides revenue generation opportunities for the local Lions Club, Rotary Club and the Montague Fire Department.

When the Flying Club's main building was lost to fire in 2006, volunteer efforts by members led to the development of a new welcome centre, clubhouse and main office that opened in 2010. It's a first-class facility that includes an informative local aviation museum, flight training classrooms, offices and a large meeting room and kitchen that is made available to the community.

The airport is used by commercial pilots involved with Lanark County businesses and industry, air ambulance transport support, training activities for the Department of National Defence and recreationally by the 240 flying club members and the many visitors who use the airstrip throughout the year.

The club was nominated by Dennis Staples and received letters of support from Dr. Donald Page and Ken Graham, Chairman of the Russ Beach-Smiths Falls-Montague Airport Association. "The Smiths Falls Flying Club transitioned from humble beginnings as the dream of five Lanark County aviators...into its current status as a polished jewel in general aviation," Mr. Graham said in his letter of support.

The final recipient, David Taylor, is a retired ambassador for Canada and former township councillor who continues to lend his time and talent to leave legacies in Lanark County. He recently made outstanding contributions to the 200th anniversary celebrations of the Perth Military Settlement through grant-writing, organizing legacy projects, enhancing activities and recruiting volunteers and sponsors.

Mr. Taylor's contributions stretch back many years and include leadership on the Tay Canal 175th Anniversary celebrations; the resurrection and restructuring of the Perth Historical Society in 2007, which has evolved into the Perth and District Historical Society; the development of a Tay River Watershed Management Plan; the creation of the Friends of the Tay Watershed organization; a Lake Management Planning Program; and a multitude of ecological projects, partnerships and a historical research projects.

Mr. Taylor was nominated by Tay Valley Township Planner Noelle Reeve. "It gives me great pleasure to nominate David Taylor...for his dedication to community and his vision in working on projects cooperatively with multiple municipalities to benefit the economy (through heritage tourism), the environment (through watershed protection) and community (through inspiring volunteers)," she said. He also received letters of support from Watersheds Canada, Annie Dalton, Frank Roy, Friends of the Tay Watershed, Karen Hunt and Drummond/North Elmsley Township.

Warden Code thanked the recipients for their contributions to enhance life in Lanark County. "They are role models whose generosity and passion for this place will leave a legacy for us all."

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 2015 award recipients were Barrie Crampton and Ann MacPhail in the Heritage and Volunteerism category.

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For more information, please contact:

Leslie Drynan
Clerk
Lanark County
1-888-9-LANARK, ext. 1502

Presentation photos available at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/lgkk8h4wpa5pfbp/AAAG-Y72e4fSJ0A5UzscU6zYa?dl=0>