



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Citizen of Character – Elementary**

#### **Mya Cheung**

Markham

Mya and the students in the Milk Bag Club at All Saints Catholic Elementary School are being recognized because of their concern for the poor. The students' egos are not all about themselves but about the plight of others in need.

In their endeavour, milk bags are transformed into sleeping mats for the homeless in Toronto, as well throughout Central America, the Caribbean Islands, South America, Africa and the Philippines.

Under Mya's direction, their combined efforts have produced close to 100 mats in the last 18 months.

Mya knows that by working alone, not much can be accomplished, but by working together, they can make a huge difference in people's lives.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Citizen of Character – Secondary**

#### **Jathusha Mahenthirarajan**

Richmond Hill

Jathusha's commitment to her passion of social justice, innovative skills and positive mindset has set her apart as someone who believes in youth empowerment to create positive changes in her community.

Jathusha has volunteered over 2,000 hours serving local and international communities and helped raise thousands of dollars.

Jathusha's strong personal mandate to engage and empower girls to develop leadership skills and reach out to the community to become social agents of change was reaffirmed when Jathusha founded Ontario's very first chapter of Girl Talk, a peer-to-peer girls mentoring program that aims to help young teenage girls build self-esteem, develop leadership skills and recognize the value of community service.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Citizen of Character - Young Adult**

#### **Crystal Pangman**

Georgina

Crystal is exceptional because she not only helps existing charities but she recognizes different needs and she creates events and programs to meet those needs and improve lives.

A previous Character Awards winner in 2013, Crystal has continued to created and played leading roles with the Georgina Challenge – Show you care program, Hawkins Halloween Haunt For Hunger, the Georgina Terry Fox Run Committee, the Georgina Hospice-Haircuts for Hospice, Big Brothers Big Sisters of York, Secret Santa at the RGH Nursing Home, and the Sutton Agricultural Fair Junior Ambassador Program.

Currently, Crystal is proudly creating a Georgina Ambassador Program to acknowledge the admirable qualities and contributions that Georgina Youth routinely make to their communities.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Citizen of Character - Adult**

#### **Kathy Proudfoot**

East Gwillimbury

Kathy is in her second term as a Director on the Southlake Hospital board and was previously the Chair of the Community Counts Campaign for the hospital.

As a cancer survivor, she works with both the Cancer Society and Southlake's Regional Cancer Centre and shows perseverance and optimism in her role as a peer support volunteer.

Kathy demonstrates great inclusiveness in her support of others as seen with her involvement for the past 14 years with the Nin Os Kom Tin which is an organization that was established to raise cultural awareness and to rekindle the relationships between aboriginal peoples and all other cultures who live in Newmarket and the surrounding area.

Kathy has also been on the board of directors for the past six years of the Ranji Singh Foundation which produces events and programs to promote social integration of the changing demographics in York Region.

She embraces community and is inclusive and respectful of York's diverse population. Her actions demonstrate her tremendous character and her love of community.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Citizen of Character - Adult**

#### **Michael Delaney**

Markham

As part of the Markville Secondary School Custodial Staff, Mike always shows care for staff and students by consistently lending a helping hand; there is no situation for which Mike can't brainstorm a solution.

By nature, he is the epitome of respect, integrity, and optimism as clear to anyone who knows him, because he is approachable and welcoming to all.

He consistently goes beyond the call of duty in his support of all school ventures and participates in so many after school events and functions just to help out and show his support.

His competence and integrity is matched only by his humility and modesty; Mike is truly a 'care taker' and is without doubt one of the most respected members of the Markville school family.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Citizen of Character – Senior**

#### **Beth Greenblatt**

Aurora

Beth has volunteered with palliative care at Southlake Regional Health Centre for four years. Beth and her volunteer partner and friend Dinie quietly walk the halls of palliative care at Southlake.

Beth says: “Walking in with a teddy bear has been an amazing way to get patients to open up and let us help. We’re just there to be there. One thing we tell the families is that now that they have a bear they are not alone. So when you go home and leave your loved one here they are in good hands.”

Beth demonstrates character in action every time she arrives to Southlake. Her compassion and respect for palliative patients is exemplary. Her integrity in dealing with both patients and families is remarkable.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Citizen of Character – Senior**

#### **Dinie Vanderwerf**

East Gwillimbury

Dinie Vanderwerf started volunteering at Southlake Regional Health Centre almost thirty years ago. She is part of a team of very special Palliative Care Volunteers whose compassion and kindness towards others makes a huge difference in the lives of many patients and their families. Dinie started making stuffed teddy bears for patients. She wanted patients to feel comforted especially when their families couldn't be by their side.

Over the years, Dinie has hand made more than a thousand bears. In the last three years, she has found it harder and harder to keep up and that's why she's so grateful to her volunteer partner, Beth Greenblatt, for continuing her work making bears for palliative patients.

Dinie demonstrates courage, compassion, optimism and perseverance and she has been relentless in her commitment to helping patients and their families for nearly 30 years.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **School of Character – York Region District School Board**

#### **Thornhill Secondary School**

Thornhill

At Thornhill Secondary School 'Character' is truly 'in Action'. The school intentionally cultivates a caring, inclusive community, by ensuring grade 9s' a smooth transition, supporting and celebrating their booming English Language Learners population, and prioritizing mental health and well-being.

In the past 2 years, the school's ELL population has more than tripled. The staff and students have responded with enthusiasm and open arms. And the 'Hand-in Hand Club' is just one example of the tremendous work taking place in the school.

The group is comprised of courageous, diverse student-leaders who hold bi-annual, multi-lingual orientation sessions, host a variety of cultural heritage events, and assist in important school processes like registration and course selection.

The 'Hand-in Hand Club' collaborates with staff, students, Board representatives and community members to promote a spirit of international respect, understanding and cooperation, and are a vital link so our newcomers can persevere through the challenges attendant with moving to Canada.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **School of Character – York Catholic District School Board**

#### **All Saints Catholic Elementary School**

Markham

Every facet of the All Saints School Community is deeply entrenched in living out Character education. The members of the school community actively and willingly accept responsibility for the care of others. Initiative comes from within and the perseverance which is employed ensures that goals are achieved despite any challenges. The school is a place of optimism where its members bring hope, celebrate others and serve those around them.

Many of the students, parents, staff and other partners are actively involved as ambassadors for numerous community initiatives outside of school and during their own time.

A keen focus has been placed on initiatives directed at raising awareness for bullying prevention, greater sensitivity to mental health concerns and a celebration of differences which exist among people.

It is an environment which supports respect and the dignity of every person.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **School of Character - Alternative Educational Institution**

#### **Aurora Preparatory Academy**

Aurora

Aurora Preparatory Academy (APA) is a co-educational, academic institution which centres on the three basic principles of Foundation, Community and Excellence.

Aurora Prep instills in its students a sense of respect and responsibility, providing them a solid foundation for the rest of their lives. Even from the youngest grades, they are taught to respect themselves, first and foremost, and, in so doing, develop a respect of others and, ultimately, a responsibility toward their community.

Aurora Prep has an exceptionally inclusive community; even new families sense the compassion and the camaraderie embedded in the school climate. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between existing and visiting students, as APA has an uncanny ability to welcome people into its community with ease and grace.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Educator of Character**

#### **Fern Grenon**

Whitchurch-Stouffville

Fern Grenon is an inspiration to students, teachers and parents alike. Her optimism is infectious; she is always working with a smile. She thinks outside the box to relay messages to the kids – one of the favourites is when she pulls out the brother and sister bear puppets to demonstrate how to be compassionate to her students.

Fern doesn't preach - she models behavior and encourages inclusiveness daily; she inspires students to become involved in school issues and teaches them to celebrate diversity.

From Eid to Hanukah to Diwali, students celebrate them all with courage, enthusiasm and acceptance. Mrs.Grenon has an effective and unique way in connecting with the students and treats all children equally and with fairness and respect.

Fern Grenon is beyond inspirational and has a wonderful rapport with her students, teachers and parents alike.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Educator of Character**

#### **William Schoenhardt**

King

Bill is a terrifically enthusiastic, dedicated, ambitious teacher. As the Business Department Head, he supervises the Student Council, coaches the Nordic Ski team, teaches Outdoor Education, business, and in addition to all of that, Bill is the key organizing teachers for the annual Grade 9 Orientation week, which involves taking grade 9 students to an overnight camp for three days and two nights.

He is enthusiastic with the students, encouraging them to push themselves to their personal best and includes everyone with his activities, no matter what level of skill they come to him with.

Bill is kind, giving, understanding, accommodating, enthusiastic, dedicated, and serious about success for himself, his students and our school community. It is through his consistent and tireless dedication to his work that Bill demonstrates the true essence of character.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Character Through the Arts**

#### **Merlene Samuel –Cephas (1962-2015)**

Newmarket

Merlene Samuel Cephas, director and founder of Arts Spotlight Theatre School (formerly known as the Newmarket School of Dance and Theatre Arts) has been a mainstay in the local arts community for the past 30 years. Merlene's devotion to teaching the arts to young people over the years has proven her theory that the arts can truly change a person for good.

Her compassion, integrity and dedication to youth and the community has been seen through the years with her creation of the Voice Impact Project, a not for profit performance group that gave youth a voice through original stories of friendship, compassion and respect.

Merlene and her creation of Arts Spotlight Theatre School is a place that gave and gives so many a place to belong, somewhere to go, to be welcomed, to build confidence and friendships, develop their talents and creative side.

The last two years of her life Merlene bravely battled cancer while always staying optimistic and courageous, continuing to teach and fulfill her responsibility to the students she worked with.

Sadly, Merlene passed away November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Merlene has been an inspiring person of character throughout her life and career in her dedication to giving youth an opportunity to experience and grow through the arts. Her legacy is that youth can have a voice and create change in their lives and for the betterment of their communities through exposure to the arts.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Character Through Sports**

#### **Matthew Dettman**

Georgina

At the early age of 18, Matthew knew he wanted to give back to the sports that he loved and gave him so much as a child and young teenager.

He decided the best way was to become a coach, and in 2011, Matthew began coaching two hockey teams and also with the Lake Simcoe Soccer clubs.

In everything Matthew does he shows he truly cares, no matter if the team wins or loses, he shows players the true meaning of sportsmanship and camaraderie and that no one is ever left behind and everyone has something to bring to the team atmospheres.

Matthew is an incredible young man who has touched the lives of countless youth within our community not only by teaching them the skill of hockey, but instilling in them they are all important and they are all capable of accomplishing whatever they want and that everyone is a winner.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Business Person of Character**

#### **Dean Smalley**

Newmarket

Dean Smalley is the owner of A & B Courier in Newmarket. As a business man and community leader, he exemplifies his motto: It's our responsibility to give back to the community because it's the community that has helped to make us who we are.

Dean loves Newmarket. Whether it be his commitment to the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce, his work with the Board at Big Brothers Big Sisters of York Region, his support of Southlake Regional Health Centre or his time as a volunteer goaltender assisting with the Slap Shot program.

Dean takes his responsibilities seriously and can be counted on to take the initiative required for success.

He truly believes in others and perseveres to address challenges as they arise. All while wearing a smile and having all the best intentions in mind.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Organization of Character – Profit**

#### **Bob Vaughan**

Georgina

Bob Vaughan has volunteered for many years for organizations such as the MS Society and Canadian Mental Health.

Through Bob's volunteer work, early on he realized that there was a real shortage of assistance for families with disabilities in managing their financial affairs. Through his financial services business, Vaughan and Associates, Bob began offering free education sessions for members of many non-for-profit organizations and families of Ontario Brain Injury Association, Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness, ADHD Association, MS Society and Canadian Mental Health Association.

Bob spent countless hours with families as he helped them navigate through legal, tax, and government programs to make it easier for people with disabilities to receive financial entitlements.

He does this all by being very respectful of their situation, with kindness, patience and many hours of advocacy on their behalf.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Organization of Character – Not For Profit or Service Organization**

#### **Autism Teenage Partnership**

Richmond Hill

Autism Teenage Partnership (ATP) is non-profit organization serving York Region dedicated to supporting teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families through accessible, free, and peer-to-peer model of weekly social programs. ATP is entirely youth-led and allows its participants to fulfill their potential in a non-academic and non-pressure environment.

Since 2014, ATP has opened three locations in Toronto, Waterloo, and Richmond Hill with over 90 registered participants and 25 volunteers. Their accessible and free weekly programming helps teenagers to cultivate friendship skills and develop positive social skills that enhance their qualities of life.

The programs involve social and interactive activities such as board games, puzzles, crafts, sports, and team building activities, as well as maintain flexibility and cater towards the individual needs of the participants.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Change our World - Environmental**

#### **Brent Kopperson**

Aurora

Brent is the founder and Executive Director of Windfall Ecology Centre, a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to building sustainable communities.

The creation of Windfall was inspired by a vision of healthy communities, where economic, social and environmental needs achieve balance through social innovation, community partnership, and community action.

Brent is a strong, indomitable activist for the environment and has been recognized for his commitment to social innovation and community development with a focus on environmental sustainability.

Brent has been successful in bringing green energy to communities, and creating dialogue between multiple stakeholders, including governments, communities, investors, and advocacy groups.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Change our World - Community**

#### **Jehan Chaudhry**

Georgina

Jehan Chaudhry, Executive Director of Sandgate Women's Shelter of York Region, Inc. perfectly embodies the attributes of a change agent and leader demonstrating 'character in action'. Under Jehan's leadership, Sandgate Women's Shelter has expanded to two shelters in the region and two satellite offices in Keswick and Richmond Hill.

Jehan has led the process of reducing barriers to service for girls and women impacted by issues of forced marriage, 'honour-based' violence, human trafficking, mental health and addictions.

Jehan embodies the attributes of a community leader and has significantly improved the way women and children impacted by violence in York Region receive support. The change she has inspired has grown beyond the region to other municipalities and regions across the province.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Community Hero**

#### **Maddox Blair-Hartwick**

Keswick

Maddox Blair-Hartwick 10 years old is identified with ADHD. His mother, Melissa Blair, has health issues that cause her to lose consciousness at times. The time before this last occurrence, Maddox was with his mother and was unable to "unlock" his mother's cell phone to call for help, so afterward she showed him how to access the emergency call feature on her phone.

#### **Emergency Situation:**

Melissa and Maddox were dog-sitting for a friend at the friend's home in Keswick. About 1:00am, Melissa had another episode and lost consciousness and collapsed on the bathroom floor. Maddox heard this and went to check on his mother and found her breathing erratically. He grabbed her cell phone and used the emergency call feature to call 911, however, he did not know the address of the home to provide it to the Emergency Operator.

He then took the phone and ran to the neighbour's house and pounded on the door until someone answered. He explained to the man what had happened and the man was able to provide the Operator with the information she needed to send help.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Maddox Blair-Hartwick** (continued)

In the time that Maddox and the gentleman were waiting for EMS to arrive, Maddox had the forethought to put the two dogs in a separate room, so that they would not interfere when Emergency Service people arrived.

In addition, he was able to provide EMS and York Regional Police with information they needed on arrival (i.e. what had transpired, his mother's medical history and medications she takes, etc.).

Throughout this entire situation, Maddox remained calm and level-headed and at no time panicked, as you might expect a young boy might react.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Donald Cousens Award**

#### **Kathleen Redmond**

East Gwillimbury

Kathleen Redmond, MCC, is a certified Executive coach (International Coaching Federation), corporate trainer, author and Instructor at the University of Guelph in the MA (Leadership) program. She is the founder of the Centre for Character Leadership (1993).

With over 25 years of management experience and a passion for leadership communication, Kathleen works in the heart of industry. Her work has taken her from Istanbul to Honolulu, to factories in the south of United States as well as the oil fields of Alberta. Her passion is to strengthen engagement and productivity through rich communication.

Working in English and French, Kathleen has successfully worked with leaders in the following organizations; Delta Hotels, Irving Pulp and Paper, General Motors, Royal Canadian Mint, Cara Operations Limited, North American Construction Group, Region of York, Community Living, Towns of Aurora and East Gwillimbury, Ministries of Education and Training, Colleges and Universities, Labatt Breweries, SIR Corp Restaurants, Mother Parkers Tea & Coffee Inc. and Johnston & Johnston.

She has been published in the Globe & Mail and Municipal World as well as other journals.



## **2016 Character Awards Winners**

### **Kathleen Redmond** (continued)

Kathleen has written four books; *Rules of Engagement for Communicating at Work: 5 Strategies for Decreasing Conflict and Increasing Collaboration*, *Leadership by Engagement*, *Leading Through Authentic Character to Attract, Retain and Energize*.

Her newest series ***La Maison du Parc*** is an Edu-story on ***Building a Character Culture for Trust and Results in the Workplace*** and ***Communicating in a Character Culture with Tact, Integrity and Courage in the Workplace***, was published in June 2015.

She volunteers with the Leadership Coaching Counsel coaching two EDs of not for profit organizations and as a Director with Routes of Georgina.

In partnership with the Character Community Foundation she helped to develop and deliver a series of workshops in 2015 to support a healthy, effective and engaged workplace.