



2017 Character Awards Winners

Citizen of Character – Elementary

Michael James

Markham

Michael James is a passionate and dedicated young philanthropist, who chose to save his allowance, using it to fund an annual lemonade stand benefitting Markham Stouffville Hospital. Since 2012, “Mike’s Love Lemonade” has contributed over \$15,000, including last year’s record-breaking \$5,513.

Mike prepares for the event weeks in advance, distributing flyers door-to door in his neighbourhood. He purchases all the supplies and then spends hours baking and preparing the items for sale. He has expanded the lemonade stand to include sweets, flowers, vegetable plants and homemade pizza.

Born at Markham Stouffville, Mike feels a strong connection to the hospital and also understands the importance of giving back. In a ‘thank you’ video he posted after last year’s event, Mike explained: “Everyone around you is different – so say me, – I’m fine and healthy, but say – if my friend wasn’t – I could help them by giving money to Markham Stouffville Hospital so they can feel better.”



2017 Character Awards Winners

Citizen of Character – Secondary

Aiden Aird

Markham

Aiden Aird has raised thousands of dollars for a variety of charitable initiatives, because he believes in making the world a better place for all. He dedicates most of his free time to raising funds for homeless youth programs, coaching soccer for children with special needs, and providing food for the less fortunate.

Aiden has a passion for promoting science education (STEM) and is the founder of Developing Innovations, an organization that engages young students and shares knowledge with the next generation of STEM leaders.

Committed to speaking out, raising both awareness and funds, Aidan accomplishes all of this with tremendous courage, perseverance and a positive attitude.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Citizen of Character - Young Adult

Jacquelyn Kendal
Vaughan

Jacquelyn Kendal is a passionate role model, educating others about the emotional toll that can result from bullying. As a victim herself, she shares her very personal story and encourages everyone to ensure they are respectful, regardless of differences.

Spending countless hours connecting with schools and organizations, Jacquelyn speaks free of charge and has presented workshops to over 2,000 children this past year. These workshops have provided a valuable opportunity to hear a first-hand rendition of the effects of bullying, as she provides a brave and honest account of her personal journey.

In addition, Jacquelyn shares her inspirational story and optimistic outlook with educators and associations, so that they may better understand the challenges faced by those who have experienced bullying and support working to ensure it does not continue.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Citizen of Character - Adult

Kimberley Dominguez

Vaughan

Kimberley Dominquez is a member of Discovery Public School's School Council as well as a trained chef, and was the perfect volunteer for our start-up Breakfast Program. The first year is often the most challenging and she supported us at every step on the road to success.

From purchasing bowls, cutlery, cooking supplies and more, Kimberley was an amazing asset; even more so when it came to considering sources of food, funding, storage and safe food handling. She supported us with shopping, preparation, menus and most importantly, with innovative ideas on how to include the children in the process.

Now in our third year, we serve close to 200 meals each morning with Kimberley on hand bright and early to help with cooking, teaching and serving. She gives a great deal of her time, knowledge and support every week to making our school and our students, stronger and healthier.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Citizen of Character – Senior

Lorraine Hackenbrook
Georgina

Lorraine Hackenbrook is an incredible woman with outstanding integrity and character. A respected and dedicated volunteer, she supports organizations as varied as the Alzheimer’s Walk for Memories, Morning Glory PS Breakfast Club, Salvation Army Christmas Kettle, Virginia United Church and many others.

In addition, Lorraine is an avid hockey and baseball volunteer and a member of the inaugural Board of the Family Life Centre, a member of the Virginia Hall Board and the Hospice Georgina fundraising committee.

As a concerned citizen, Lorraine was instrumental in ensuring children’s safety by advocating for the Turn Lanes at Morning Glory Public School and in so doing, set standards elsewhere for this initiative.



2017 Character Awards Winners

School of Character – York Region District School Board

Aldergrove Public School

Markham

Aldergrove Public School has lived up to its motto ‘Invite Community, Inspire Leadership’ by engaging and supporting students on their journey to becoming dynamic, literate and compassionate world citizens. Activities that encourage student government, the arts, diversity, healthy and active living is reflective of their efforts at building an inclusive, empathetic community.

The school’s emphasis on student achievement and well-being, through a focus on Inquiry and Social Justice, has led to the development and adoption of seven Key Values, inspired by the First Nations teaching of the seven grandfathers.

Aldergrove Public School has created an inclusive and equitable learning culture by encouraging meaningful partnerships between students, parents, staff, volunteers and the broader community.



2017 Character Awards Winners

School of Character – York Catholic District School Board

St. Brigid Catholic Elementary School

Whitchurch-Stouffville

St. Brigid Catholic Elementary School believes in working as part of the larger community and is particularly proud of their Legacy Project, which began as a partnership with the Town of Stouffville. The project pairs community seniors with students in a variety of ways - from having them read with young students, work on math with older ones and together, revitalize the school's front flower gardens. There are plans to plant a vegetable garden this spring.

The school has also rallied behind two families who lost their homes to fire, by helping to support them financially, spiritually and emotionally. The creation of a beautiful outdoor classroom was completed in partnership with the community and dedicated to the memory of a beloved teacher whose life was lost to cancer.

St. Brigid's integrity and compassion is evident in both the local and global fundraising campaigns they support, which have included Markham Stouffville Hospital, Terry Fox Foundation, Heart & Stroke, as well as disaster relief for countries experiencing natural disasters.



2017 Character Awards Winners

School of Character - Independent

Holy Trinity School

Richmond Hill

Holy Trinity School provides an atmosphere where each student is encouraged to find their ethos, nurture their character and give back to their community. From Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12, students learn to build their confidence and their abilities and then create opportunities to share these.

Whether through volunteering at Martha's Table, Yellow Brick House or 360 Kids, students are guided in how to show compassion to others while taking action to make a difference. Students are encouraged to select a cause that concerns them, research and present their findings and then work across subjects to create solutions that they can put into action, both within the school and the greater community.

Character development is woven within their academic development and is evident in all that they accomplish.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Educator of Character

Krysten Cameron

Markham

Krysten Cameron has made a profound impact since arriving at German Mills Public School and it has not gone unnoticed. Krysten has implemented Character of the Month Awards and designed a school Touchstone by which all students and staff are guided. She has also worked to rebrand the school, ensuring that staff, students and parents played an integral part in the process. This has resulted in tremendously heightened school spirit.

Krysten has also implemented a healthy snack program and worked to secure funding for much needed repairs, equipment and musical instruments. Most recently, she has been working alongside the School Council on a much anticipated school playground, the installation of which we are happily looking forward to this spring.

Her door is always open and Krysten has ensured that this welcoming feeling extends to every member of our school community. We are extremely grateful for her dedication and commitment to making our school the best it can be.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Character Community Collaboration

Jason Scott

Aurora

Jason Scott, a master basketball coach, believed the youth of Newmarket would benefit from a basketball club that focused not only on skill development and winning, but on character development as well. In 1999, he founded Newmarket's first house league basketball program which developed into the York North Basketball Association (YNBA), supporting over 10,000 children across the Region.

While coaching children of all skill levels, Jason focuses on encouraging youth to pursue their dreams, both on and off the court. His supportive methods build trust and confidence, as he treats every member of the club as a valued individual.

Jason volunteers as a Sport Aurora Representative, a planning partner on the East Gwillimbury Healthy and Active Living Plaza build and with the Town of Aurora's 'Open Streets' initiative to name just a few. He commits his time and energy, all while continuing to work as a full-time teacher at Sacred Heart Catholic High School. In each of his roles, Jason determines a way to identify challenges, find solutions and bring the community together to resolve them.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Character Community Colleague

Sgt. Anthony Torresan (Badge #651)

Aurora

Anthony Torresan has been a valued member of the York Regional Police Force since 1988. During his career, he has had a very positive impact on many lives, both within the force and the greater community.

Anthony was the driving force behind the creation and development of the very successful York Regional Police *UNITED* Hero. He generated excitement for the project and never wavered in recognizing its potentially positive impact. *UNITED*, the film, brought officers and community volunteers together and has inspired annual Youth Film and Music Festivals.

As a strong supporter of the Ontario Mobilization and Engagement Model of Community Policing, Anthony strives to empower the community to become leaders in the fight against crime. He is responsible for the development and enhancement of many community partnerships, including those with York Region Transit, York Region Community Housing and Central Ontario Crime Prevention Association to name a few.

Anthony is an ethical and esteemed officer who is respected by his fellow officers and supervisors, as well as by the community as a whole.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Character Community Leader

Laura Daly

Whitchurch-Stouffville

Laura Daly, along with her brother Ryan, founded GetRecD, an organization dedicated to enriching the lives of local leukemia cancer patients. The organization has raised over \$420,000 to directly support patients since its inception in 2003.

With her brother's passing, Laura personally witnessed the toll taken not only on the patients, but also on their families and caregivers. It was very important to her that financial and emotional support be a hallmark of GetRecD's work.

Laura makes the extra effort to ensure events run smoothly, that patients attending are treated as VIPs and those funds are distributed straight to the families affected.

She believes in building relationships, remaining strong and positive and always being there as a support in whatever way she might be of help. Laura has also worked to educate others on the growing concerns regarding chemicals in products and the harm they might do.

A strong and committed advocate, Laura's compassion, commitment and courage have made a tremendous difference in helping to lighten the burden for so many in our community.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Character Community Innovator

Bob Bak
Vaughan

Bob Bak developed a Korean Heritage Language Program in 1979 and worked tirelessly to integrate it into the school system. Despite setbacks over the years, he persevered and his efforts resulted in the Ministry of Education mandating the program in 1989. Today, enrollment in Heritage Language Programs in York Region exceeds 17,000 students, with more than 500 classes in 22 languages.

He is the Founder and President of the Korean-Canadian Alliance, the Founder and Executive Director of the Korean Community Centre for Multiculturalism and Site Administrator of International Languages (Korean Programs) for the York Region District School Board.

Bob also commits his time as a member of the York Regional Police Uniform Recruiting Community Advisory committee and is the Founder and Secretary-Treasurer of the Little Lights Relief Organization.

A true community innovator, Bob's initiative, integrity and perseverance has been of tremendous benefit to children, families and the community at large.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Character Community Innovator

Ron Weese

Aurora

Ron Weese is a dedicated and committed volunteer with a passion for sharing and promoting his expertise in sport, as well as promoting the importance of incorporating daily physical activity and its benefits to the overall physical and mental well-being of everyone.

In his role with Sport Aurora, Ron has worked tirelessly to develop and create Aurora's Sports Hall of Fame, which honours the legacy of inducted members from our community while celebrating sports history.

Ron's most recent contribution has been working on Activate Aurora, with the goal of making Aurora 'Canada's Most Active Community' through education awareness, capacity building and sustainable programming. Bringing together a team of community partners, organizations and associations, they have already initiated a number of events, including the York Region Physical Literacy Summit.

Planning an open streets event that would temporarily close local streets to cars, opening them up for walking, cycling, playing and socializing, is also in the works as Ron remains committed to supporting a strong, vibrant and healthy community.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Community Hero

Belinda's Place

Newmarket

Belinda's Place is a tribute to what can happen when a caring and compassionate community — its citizens, businesses and government — create a partnership that is committed to building a stronger, healthier community.

Every woman deserves a place to call home – that's the idea behind Belinda's Place. It provides single homeless women with a safe and supportive environment so they can get back on their feet.

A study, commissioned by the York Region Alliance to End Homelessness, and paid for by The Regional Municipality of York, in 2007, highlighted the urgent need for emergency housing for homeless women in York Region. There were no places in York Region that existed to serve single women without homes who were not fleeing from violence.

Town of Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen and former Newmarket-Aurora Member of Parliament Belinda Stronach joined forces to make a difference. They inspired a team of 30 community members to come together with a vision for Belinda's Place emergency housing for homeless women. In 2010, York Regional Council approved the development of an emergency housing facility to help single homeless women.

Soon after, Belinda's Place Foundation was established. The Foundation made a commitment to engage the community and raise one million dollars toward the cost of building an emergency housing facility that would provide services to at risk and homeless women. Belinda Stronach served as honorary chair, joined by board members Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Jim Alexander, Donna Gerrits, Steve Hinder, Debora Kelly, Brian Kressler, Brenda McLennan, Pat Noble and Jackie Playter.

Demonstrating generosity and true compassion, Belinda's Place garnered widespread support from the community, businesses, local municipalities and faith groups and raised the million dollars. Magna International also donated an additional million for an endowment fund that would be used to enhance programs and services at Belinda's Place.

Belinda's Place opened on November 16, 2015.



2017 Character Awards Winners

Donald Cousens Community Impact

Shawn Shephard

Two things that Shawn Shephard absolutely loves is working with children and hockey. With that in mind it is not a surprise that Shawn is both the developer and the passionate program manager of Character Community's Slap Shot Hockey Program. From helmets to sharpened skates to their very own hockey stick, Slap Shot is an after school hockey program that has been running in York Region since 2009. It provides newcomer and low income children in grades 4-6 with the opportunity to learn Canada's national game for the first time. The 7 week program gives children that have never played the game, the opportunity to experience our national sport for the first time, all while teaching the character attributes. They will learn the rules of hockey along with invaluable lessons to improve leadership skills, socialization, nutrition and health.

By the end of 2017 over 1500 students in York Region will have been impacted by this program and been instilled with Shawn's love of the "good ole Hockey" game.

"To be able to see the pure joy on the players faces after they leave their comfort zone, fall down on the ice, and get back up is priceless. The learning comes from play, and numerous times students come back years later to say how much they enjoyed the program and learned from it. It's the true essence of Character Education in action."

When Shawn is not coaching Team Slap Shot, he is an in demand speaker, business strategist, coach and host on the "Sugar Free Shawn Show" an inspiration online show for people living with type one diabetes.

His clients include: Johnson & Johnson, Allstate, LinkedIn, YMCA and Verizon. Shawn is a proud recipient of: The Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, and the Canadian Diabetes Association's National Leadership Award.

Website [Shawn Shephard](#)