
County of Lanark presents four Awards of Excellence

Three citizens and one organization were honoured on Wednesday evening as the County of Lanark presented the 2009 Awards of Excellence.

The award recognizes and honours citizens or organizations that have made a significant and/or extraordinary contribution to Lanark County. This year's recipients are Neil Fennell and Gerald Tennant for volunteerism, community service and youth; and the Lanark County Museums Network and Paul Keddy for heritage and ecology.

"The Awards of Excellence give us the opportunity to shine a spotlight on outstanding achievements by local citizens and organizations," said Warden Paul Dulmage. "I am delighted to honour our 2009 candidates and highlight the ways they have made a positive impact in our communities, which will leave a legacy for those who follow."

This is the fifth year for the awards program, which recognizes 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.

Neil Fennell of Perth, who is about to retire from a 36-year career with the Ontario Provincial Police, was nominated by his daughter, Melissa. Among countless contributions to the community are the OPP Angel Tree Program, the OPP Community Christmas Party, hundreds of educational speaking engagements and the establishment of local Neighbourhood Watch programs. He was also the founder and chairperson of the Perth Invitational Fastpitch Shootout, which brought world-class fastball to Lanark County from 1990 to 2001.

"While many of the initiatives outlined above started as part of his professional obligations they all went far beyond a nine-to-five job," Ms. Fennell said. "I can say, without hesitation, that Lanark County and its residents have benefited significantly from the contributions Neil Fennell has made to the area he calls home."

Gerald Tennant of Almonte (Mississippi Mills) was nominated by Donna King and Sheila Stanfield for his community service as a caretaker, historian and a helper to seniors. Mr. Tennant looks after Union Hall, Guthrie Church in Clayton and the Old Methodist Cemetery on Tatlock Road. He readily shares his passion for local history and helps his elderly neighbours with errands, visits them in long-term care homes and volunteers at Almonte Country Haven.

"For Gerald, volunteering his time and skills to benefit his community is not just something he does now and then," Ms. King said. "It is a way of life....He takes pride in quietly doing the menial chores that bring beauty and comfort to those who use or pass by these lovely old buildings and grounds so carefully tended."

The Lanark County Museums Network was founded in 1991 and consists of 13 organizations dedicated to preserving the county's collective history. Nominator Gregory Garland noted the network's strength is in breaking down barriers to allow small local museums to promote themselves collectively, apply for grants and organize other communications and special events. Its value has been recognized provincially and the group has raised more than \$175,000 to support its work.

"Many of our beautiful museums would not be able to get their voices heard if not for the museum network and it is through the museums that we see thousands of tourists, researchers and more visit Lanark County year after year," Mr. Garland wrote.

Dr. Paul Keddy of Drummond/North Elmsley Township was nominated by Joyce Clinton, president of the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists, for his contribution toward the conservation of the county's natural heritage with his guide book, *Earth, Water, Fire: An Ecological Profile of Lanark County*. This readable guide is used as a reference book by students, an entertaining read for residents, a background document for planners and conservationists and a resource for families and tourists looking for outings. Dr. Keddy was commended for his philanthropy, as donations from sales have benefited MVFN programs.

“In one concise guide the book tells us where Lanark’s most precious natural places can be found and offers suggestions as to how they can be protected for future generations,” Ms. Clinton said, adding it also “supports an economic foundation for building a sustainable economy by encouraging visitors to come and enjoy the wild places of Lanark County.”

The recipients received individually designed awards 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.county.lanark.on.ca and in notices in local newspapers.

Last year’s recipients were Ross Creighton for business, agriculture, industry and tourism; Carole Fuller and John Gurney for volunteerism, community service and youth; Ian Millar for arts, culture, recreation and sports and Claudia Smith for heritage and ecology.

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For more information, please contact:
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Please see attached Backgrounder for more info about each winner.
Digital photos are available upon request at clerk@county.lanark.on.ca .