




The 51st

Provincial Volunteer Awards

Program



*Nova Scotia Communities,
Culture, Tourism and Heritage
is pleased to host the
Provincial Volunteer Awards
and would like to congratulate
all award recipients.*

A Message from the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia



As The King's representative in Nova Scotia, it is a pleasure to celebrate this year's Provincial Volunteer Awards. I extend heartfelt congratulations to the individuals and organizations being recognized. Each day, Nova Scotians are uplifted by your ongoing commitment to positive change in communities across the province.

Volunteers define the quality of life for many Nova Scotians. They dedicate time and resources to caring for neighbours, protecting the environment, and creating safe spaces where all residents feel welcomed and valued. This work is done without the expectation of recognition or reward. The central motivation is a desire to give back to others and make a difference. This mindset, defined by compassion and empathy, is deserving of public recognition and serves as an example to present and future generations.

The theme of this year's award ceremony, Nova Scotia / Canada Proud, speaks to the connection between local action and national identity. Volunteers make this province a better place to live, and in doing so, strengthen the country we are all proud to call home.

As Lieutenant Governor, I am fortunate to meet many volunteers across the province. What stands out in my mind is the quiet strength and generosity brought to programs and initiatives. Your willingness to show up and lend a hand, often without being asked, is a reminder of what it means to be an engaged and productive member of a community.

To each award recipient, and to all volunteers working across the province, thank you for the time and energy you give so freely. You represent the very best of Nova Scotia and Canada.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Savage". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Mike Savage, ONS Lieutenant Governor



Premier's Message

To the recipients of the 2025 Provincial Volunteer Awards — thank you.

Through your commitment, compassion and tireless service, you show the very best of Nova Scotia. You are mentors, organizers, advocates and changemakers. You bring creativity and kindness to moments of celebration and to times of challenge, often without seeking recognition.

For more than 50 years, these awards have honoured the quiet champions who step forward simply because they care. Your dedication strengthens the bonds that hold our communities together and inspires others to follow your example. You help neighbours in need, create safe spaces for young people to learn and grow, and bring comfort to those who might otherwise feel alone.

Real leadership isn't always about titles — it's reflected in the everyday actions of people who give their time, energy and heart to make a difference. By doing so, you leave a legacy of hope, compassion and resilience that will carry forward for generations.

On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, thank you. Your contributions make our province stronger, kinder and more connected.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Tim Houston". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Honourable Tim Houston
Premier of Nova Scotia



A Message from the Minister of Community, Culture, Tourism & Heritage



Congratulations to the recipients of the 2025 Provincial Volunteer Awards. Thank you for all you do to make Nova Scotia a stronger, more caring place.

As we mark 51 years of recognizing volunteers, we're reminded of the countless acts of service and generosity that have shaped our communities. Volunteers give their time, talents and hearts — finding creative solutions, lending a hand where it's needed most, and stepping up simply because they care.

Your efforts strengthen our province in ways that go beyond numbers. You create spaces where people feel welcome and valued. You bring neighbours together, preserve our heritage, protect our natural spaces, and support the arts, culture, sport and education that enrich daily life across Nova Scotia.

Your dedication inspires hope, sparks change and shows the true power of community. By giving so freely of yourselves, you encourage others to do the same — creating a ripple effect that reaches every corner of our province.

Thank you for the spirit you bring to your volunteer work. It's the foundation of a strong, compassionate and vibrant Nova Scotia.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'D' and 'R' followed by a horizontal line.

The Honourable Dave Ritcey

Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

Order of Events

Monday, September 29th, 2025

12pm Lunch is served

Opening Performance

Malaria Warriors, Halifax Multicultural Drummers

Opening Remarks

Emcee Juanita Peters

Lieutenant Governor Mike Savage Annual Address

Honourable Dave Ritcey,

Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

Volunteer Representative Awards

Cape Breton Region, Central Region

Valley Voices Choir

Volunteer Representative Awards, continued

Fundy Region, Highland Region

Port City Ballet Company

Volunteer Representative Awards, continued

South Shore Region, Valley Region

Lindell Smith (Message to Volunteers)

Introduction of the Specialty Awards Judging Committee

NS Guard Presentation

Specialty Awards Presentations

Newcomer Volunteer of the Year

Youth Volunteer of the Year

Family Volunteer of the Year

Nova Scotia Strong Award

Maria Osende, Flamenco Dancer

Closing Remarks

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Performances

EMCEE

Juanita Peters



Juanita Peters is an award-winning actor, playwright, and film/stage director. Her films include *I Made a Vow*, *Hannah's Story*, *Africville: Can't Stop Now*, and *8:37 Rebirth*, which won international acclaim. She directed *Studio Black!* and *DIGGSTOWN*, and wrote plays such as *The San Family* and *I M Possible*. A founding member of Women in Film and Television

Atlantic and Nova MultiFest, she also serves on several arts boards. Peters is Executive Director of the Africville Museum and has received the Portia White Prize, ACTRA's Woman of the Year, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal, and the King's Coronation Medal.

Malaria Warriors



Halifax Multicultural Drummers (Halidrummers) is a diverse group united by a love for African drumming. They bring rhythm, joy, and cultural awareness to schools and communities across Nova Scotia while promoting education and raising awareness about diseases like malaria. Their performances support mental wellness and inclusivity, with a special focus on underserved and rural areas. They regularly take part in major community events like the Halifax Multicultural Festival, African Heritage Month Gala, and more. Through drumming, Halidrummers celebrate multiculturalism, build connection, and inspire hope—because when children are educated and empowered, they can change the world.

Valley Voices



Valley Voices is a vibrant a cappella chorus of diverse women from around the Annapolis Valley and beyond.

They are also a chapter of Harmony, Inc., an international organization of women who love to sing a cappella harmony in the barbershop style. The harmonies they sing capture the hearts and minds of listeners and have the ability to move people emotionally like no other form of music.

Port City Ballet Company



Port City Ballet Company; a not-for-profit arts organization, is Nova Scotia's first professional ballet company founded in 2025. Made up of locally trained dancers and professionals from abroad, who have a unique connection with Nova Scotia, the company provides classical and contemporary ballet performances throughout Nova Scotia. Port City Ballet Company is thrilled to connect with younger audiences providing a variety of workshops, performance opportunities and create an employment opportunity for students studying ballet full time. Port City Ballet Company is directly affiliated with the professional program at The School of Port City Ballet.

Lindell Smith



Lindell Smith is a lifelong resident of North End Halifax and a proud father. In 2016, at the age of 26, Lindell was elected as City Councillor for District 8 Halifax Peninsula North, a position he held until November 2024.

He is the Co-founder of Centre Line Studio, a non-profit recording studio for youth who want to express themselves through art and music. He has served as a member of various boards and commissions, including The Council on African Canadian Education (CACE), a provincial advisory council providing guidance to the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for African Nova Scotian learners. Lindell also chaired The Halifax Board of Police Commissioners from 2021-2022 and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Anti-Racism and Equity Standing Committee.

Lindell has received several awards and honours, including the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax Inspire Public Service Award and The Coast Halifax "Best of Halifax" Gold – Best Councillor (2017-2019, 2021-2023).

Flamenco Dancer **Maria Osende**



Maria Osende is a Spanish-Canadian flamenco dancer, choreographer, and producer based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Before moving to Canada, she danced with the National Ballet of Spain and the Berlin Ballet, performing across Europe. For the past 20 years, she has been an iconic figure and driving force behind flamenco in Nova Scotia.

Maria is the founder of Atlantic Flamenco and Osende Dance Arts, the only flamenco dance school in Atlantic Canada. Her work has toured extensively throughout the province and beyond, and she has performed at flamenco events in British Columbia, Ontario, and internationally.

As producer of the Atlantic Flamenco Festival and other cultural initiatives, Maria combines artistic excellence with community-building. Atlantic Flamenco thrives thanks to her leadership and the support of dedicated volunteers.

A series of thin, light gray wavy lines that flow vertically down the left side of the page, creating a sense of movement and depth.

2025 Award Recipients

2025 Award Recipients

Cape Breton Region

Michael MacMillan

Cape Breton Regional Municipality

Michael MacMillan has been a pillar of Cape Breton's basketball community for over 20 years. He has coached at various schools, helped build the Jr. Marauders brand, and was instrumental in developing the Northside Youth Basketball Association's programs. His volunteer work also extends to baseball, soccer, and hockey.

Professionally, Michael is a graphic designer at Breton Ability, where he supports individuals with varying abilities through the Learning and Employment Centre. He also donates his design expertise to help local sports organizations develop their branding and identity. One of his most notable contributions is co-founding the Simon Chiasson Alumni Basketball Tournament, now one of the largest alumni tournaments in Canada, hosting 35–40 teams annually from across Atlantic Canada.

Michael's impact goes far beyond coaching. He inspires athletes to value hard work, respect, and teamwork, creating an environment where everyone feels included and motivated. His passion, leadership, and selfless dedication have shaped young lives and strengthened the sports community throughout the region. Michael MacMillan is truly deserving of this special recognition for his outstanding contributions on and off the court.

Charlie Martell

Municipality of the County of Richmond

Charlie Martell is a catalyst for change for his community. Through his generosity, leadership, and vision, he donated his time and supplies to help support a community initiative that brought together numerous volunteer efforts in Richmond County. On December 29, 2024, a long-time L'Ardoise community member lost their home to a devastating fire. Without hesitation, Charlie stepped forward, offering support to help rebuild. His efforts inspired local contractors, community members, and business owners to come together to make this new home a reality. Charlie's ability to unite others in a time of need did not go unnoticed; he is a true community champion.

Darlene Boudreau

Municipality of the County of Inverness

Darlene Boudreau has been a very active & devoted member of the Sacred Heart Community Health Centre Auxiliary for over a decade. Darlene always attends monthly meetings and participates in the Eastern Region's Annual General Meetings. Hospital Auxiliary members dedicate many volunteer hours to help raise funds to purchase equipment and other medical articles for the hospital. In Cheticamp, the auxiliary also focuses on Foyer Père Fiset, the Dialysis & Occupational Therapy Departments, as well as the Hospital Equipment Loan Program. Events and activities organized by the Sacred Heart Community Health Centre Auxiliary are always well planned, thanks to Darlene. Darlene reserves facilities, calls volunteers to arrange for baked goods, helping hands, and much more. Darlene purchases and supplies hospital patient rooms with toiletries, and she also kindly distributes cards from the auxiliary to the sick, those in need of surgery and those who have had a death in the family. Thank you, Darlene, for your kindness, dedication and positive impact on your community. Congratulations!

Francis Xavier Doucette

Potlotek First Nation

For as long as I could remember, Francis Doucette has been helping in Potlotek in different capacities. Forty plus years ago, he joined the Volunteer Fire Department. In 2008, He got trained to be a Medical First Responder for the community. Due to being a cadet in his youth, he helped with the Army cadets when his son joined in 2005. His passion for helping his community, which was instilled into him by his parents at an early age. Like, chaperoning community trips to events (Movies, Circus, Halloween....). He would dress up as Santa Claus for the kids for Christmas. He and his wife would take kids salmon fishing on the Margaree River. At Nova Scotia Mikmaw Summer Games you can find him helping and volunteering his time making sure things were set up and gave out shirts and pins to our community members. Francis was always there for being the bingo caller for the many fundraising events held for school trips. Francis Doucette is a wonderful man and his love and passion for helping has shown through his whole life. In 2015, Francis took on the mantle of one of our Keptin's of our community which are the representatives on the Grand Council of Mi'kma'ki. Potlotek is more than proud to have Francis Xavier Doucette be awarded at the 51st Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards for Volunteer Representative Award for our community.

Ta'n teli-nsituita'si, Francis Doucette mili-apoqnmuet Potlotek. Piamiw newiskekipunqekek, nasa'sip Apoqnmuemk Naqasui'kemk. 2008ek, api-kina'masip Teli-maliamuj Ksnukewinu'k wutanmuaq. Mita nekm wejiep kekina'masimk ntepluimk nutqwe'kek, apoqnmuaapni kekina'masultijik ntepluimk ta'n tujiw wkwisl nasa'silijek 2005ek. Teli-melkuktik apoqntik wutanm weji-kina'masit wunki'kuk weja'tekemk nutqwe'kek. Nkutey, nujo'tkl alta'mkl wjit wutanm (Amalapimkewe'l, Circus, Skite'kmujua'timk.....) Amalkna'sit nkutey Santi Kla's wjit mijua'ji'jk Nipialasutmamk. Nekm aqq wte'piteml ela'la'tiji mijua'ji'jk naji-plamue'katinew Wiaqujk. No'pa Sko'sia L'nue'l Weja'ltimkl nmia'tesk apoqnmuet aqq etl-lukwet ketlewa'tun kaqi-kisa'tasin koqoey aqq tepiaji a'tlaik aqq kluskutaqnn wenik tleyawultijik wutanminaq. Francis te's eykip nujisawen wjit wenaqa'tumkl ketantumk suliewey wjit nujikina'masultijik teli-mili-alta'tij.

Francis Doucette na kelu'sit ji'nm aqq teli-ksite'tk aqq melkuktik apoqnmuemk nemitumk teli-pkitawsit. 2015ek Francis kaqama'lup Keptinewin Mi'kmawey Sante' Mawio'mi wjit wutanminu. Ninen Potlotekewaqq piami-wulte'tmek pekwatoq Naniskekipunqek jel newtipunqekewey Nuji-apoqnmuet Wette'mukewey wjit wutanminu.

Annie Beaton

Town of Port Hawkesbury

Annie Beaton has been a dedicated community volunteer for many years. She has been involved in many committees, including Festival of the Strait, Celtic Colours, Terry Fox Run, Tall Ships Festival, The Strait Pirates Junior B Hockey Club and so many more. Annie gives every bit of herself to every volunteer task she undertakes, working tirelessly before and during the event to ensure it is successful and enjoyed by all. She is a driving force behind the Tiger MacKie Oldtimers Hockey Tournament, paying special attention to the Trish Little Division. On many occasions, Annie has offered her help to various individuals and projects. She is the first person to jump at the opportunity to lend her hands, hard work and expertise to events, fundraisers, sporting tournaments and more. She is also a true supporter of those events, attending, buying raffle tickets, and helping to promote. The Town of Port Hawkesbury is fortunate to have many wonderful volunteers, and Annie Beaton is certainly one of the best. While she is a very humble person, she is also the most deserving of this award.

Norma Gould

We'koqma'q First Nation

Norma Gould is a dedicated and passionate volunteer who has made a long-lasting impact through their commitment to community service. Known for their leadership, reliability, and generous spirit, Norma has consistently gone above and beyond to support local initiatives, empower others, and create positive change. Whether organizing events, mentoring youths, or

stepping in wherever help is needed, Norma exemplifies the true meaning of service. Their contributions continue to inspire those around them and strengthen the heart of the community. A true role model, Norma reminds us of all of the power of one amazing person to make a real difference.

Audrey Ann Pierro

Wagmatcook First Nation

For as long as we can remember, Audrey has been involved in her community, she helps with all aged events, such as cooking for community wakes, serving at events, helping out at the youth moose camp, involved in our Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Summer games, Helping at our powwows, chaperoning our youth trips and events like dances and any youth event. She is always willing to jump for anyone that needs her and any events that need her she is one of the definitions as a true community volunteer! She is an extraordinary person as great mother and a great grandmother. Audrey is a great asset for Wagmatcook to have, and all her hard work does not go unnoticed! Thank you for your hard work, Audrey!

Ta'n teli-nsituita'si, Audrey kaqi-ika'lsit wutanm, apoqntik koqoey teliaq wjit ta'n pasik tewijo'tliliji, nkutey etoqtek wjit nipapultimkl, apoqnmuet koqoey teliaq, apoqntik tia'muk netuklimk wjit nutqo'tliliji, ika'lsit No'pa Sko'sia L'nue'l Weja'ltimkl, apoqntikl Mawio'mi'l, nujo'tkl alta'mkl wjit nutqo'tlijik aqq amalkaltimkl aqq koqoey teliaq wjit nutqoltijik. Mu naqatkelsik apoqnmuan wenl nuta'lij apoqnmasuti kiswa apoqnmuen koqoey teliaq, kis-tluenes nekm ketloqo weli-apoqntik wutanm! Welte'tasit ula e'pit mita weleywaji wtusl aqq wuji'jk. Waqmitkuk iknmakwejik ala'lanew Audrey-al keknuite'tasik tetuji wla'teket. Wela'like tetuji attikna'sin wjit wutanmn Audrey!

Nancy Cronin

Victoria County

Nancy Cronin received three separate nominations for Victoria County's volunteer of the year. Described as "a force" in the best way possible, her community members all expressed appreciation for her positivity, willingness to volunteer for many organizations including the Ross Ferry Stewardship Society, Big Bras d'Or Community Hall, is a community champion for the recreation programs held at the local school leading pickle ball and walking, and has organized a foot care clinic for her community. Her selflessness and energy are infectious in her community and she inspires others to volunteer as well.

Buster Matthews

Membertou

Since 1990, Buster Mathews has contributed his time to volunteer to help provide access and availability to the Youth in Membertou. Buster would go to Membertou hockey ice times and help with the children, tying skates, providing Pucks, water bottles, and a certain drink the kids called "Buster Juice", which was Gatorade. Since 1975, he continues to volunteer with the Wally Bernard Memorial Youth Hockey Tournament handing out Trophies and Presentations. Buster is always providing support for the Youth to attend certain events whether it's hockey tournaments, hockey schools, baseball tourneys, or Dance/Cheer competitions. His commitment to the Youth in the Community is Overwhelming and is an outstanding example of Selflessness.

2025 Award Recipients

Central Region

Barb Charteris

Halifax Regional Municipality

Barb Charteris has dedicated countless hours to making a positive impact on the Timberlea community through her innovative volunteer work. Not only did she identify the need for food security, but she also took action by founding the BLT Community Cupboard program, providing essential food and personal items for those in need. In addition to this, Barb initiated the Free Will Lunch offering at Trinity United Church, creating a space for people to connect and enjoy a homemade meal. Her selflessness and leadership in these programs have made a significant difference in the lives of many, and her influence continues to be felt in the community.

In addition to her work with food security, Barb has volunteered with numerous organizations, including Mission Mart, Bay Treasure, and the BLT Residents' Association. She has shown incredible organizational skills, often recruiting and organizing volunteers for various projects. Whether it's maintaining the local trails by picking up trash during her daily walks or organizing community events, Barb leads by example and inspires others to get involved. Her unwavering commitment, kind-hearted spirit, and ability to bring the community together make Barb a true pillar of Timberlea, one whose contributions have strengthened the community for years to come.

Jonathan Frontain

Halifax Regional Municipality

Jonathon Frontain has dedicated over a decade to shaping the debate community in Nova Scotia, serving as a coach, mentor, and leader. He has been instrumental in rebuilding both the K-12 and university debate circuits, taking on key roles that have had a lasting impact. As a coach at Charles P. Allen High School, Jonathon has led students to national competitions while fostering their leadership, public speaking, and advocacy skills.

His commitment to volunteerism and education is exemplified by his continued involvement with the Nova Scotia Debating Society, where he has played a crucial role in expanding its reach and creating opportunities for young debaters. Beyond his coaching, Jonathon has demonstrated exceptional leadership at the university level, having served as Vice President of the Canadian University Society for Intercollegiate Debate and organizing national tournaments, such as the 2023 Canadian National Parliamentary Debate Championships in Halifax.

He has worked relentlessly to support other debate societies in the region, helping to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for debaters across Nova Scotia. His dedication and passion for debate and youth development have made a significant, enduring impact on the province.

Layla Hussain

Halifax Regional Municipality

Layla Hussain shows outstanding leadership and creativity through her extensive volunteer work. As a debate coach for over two years, she has mentored more than 50 students, helping many qualify for provincial championships and receive national recognition. She is also a co-founder of the Art Action Alliance, engaging in over 100 community members in climate awareness through art as an accessible resource to help combat eco-anxiety. Additionally, Layla helped raise over \$200 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation through donation drives and bake sales at school.

Her dedication extends beyond structured programs. Layla provides free babysitting and pet-sitting for families in need, enabling parents to access work or education opportunities. So far, she's volunteered for over 150 hours for this. Layla's involvement in community events, including being a volunteer photographer and social media content creator, has amplified outreach and visibility for several community organizations. Layla's compassionate and innovative spirit has inspired peers and younger students alike, establishing her as a trusted mentor.

Whether she's leading debate practice, painting for climate justice, or supporting families in her neighborhood, Layla brings creativity, empathy, and determination to everything she does. Her contributions continue to shape her community in positive ways, leaving a legacy of engagement, support, and kindness.

Rick Burns

Halifax Regional Municipality

Rick Burns's dedication to his community is evident through his leadership in numerous impactful initiatives. As Chair of the Greater Hammonds Plains–Lucasville Remembrance Day Committee, he has meticulously organized annual ceremonies, ensuring military personnel and community members are honored with dignity and respect. He also coaches his son's baseball team, fostering teamwork and perseverance in young athletes, and serves as Co-Chair of the Adult Dance Committee for the Cape Breton Charitable Association of Halifax, promoting Cape Breton culture and uniting people through shared celebrations.

Rick's commitment extends to his work with the White Hills Residents Association and the Tantallon Wildfire Life Safety Coalition, where he advocates for safety, resources, and long-term solutions to community challenges. His leadership style encourages collaboration, inspiring others to step forward and contribute their skills and time.

Whether organizing cultural events, leading safety initiatives, or mentoring youth, Rick consistently demonstrates that collective

effort is key to building strong, connected communities. His passion, selflessness, and drive have left a lasting mark on the organizations he supports and on the lives of those around him. Through his volunteerism, Rick continues to exemplify how one individual can spark meaningful change and foster unity.

Valar Kaliaperumal

Halifax Regional Municipality

Valar Kaliaperumal's leadership has left a profound mark on her community, both locally and provincially. As President of the Indo-Canadian Association of Nova Scotia and the Maritime Tamil Welfare Association, she has championed initiatives that promote cultural preservation and community integration. Her efforts include organizing blood donation drives, fundraising for wildfire relief, and establishing the Indian Visa Processing Center in Halifax, improving access to consular services for Atlantic Canadians.

Valar's work has also fostered collaboration across multicultural communities, creating inclusive spaces and programs that benefit diverse groups. She has hosted free tax clinics for students, seniors, and low-income families, and introduced Tamil language classes for children to keep cultural heritage alive.

Beyond her community leadership, Valar has contributed to healthcare research in cancer immunotherapy and cardiology, mentored graduate students, supported local temples, and served on the Research Ethics Board. Her ability to inspire and empower others has created a ripple effect of volunteerism, drawing more people into community service.

Through her visionary leadership, dedication, and compassion, Valar has strengthened both the Tamil and Indo-Canadian communities while contributing to Halifax's broader social fabric. Her work continues to inspire lasting, positive changes.

John Macfie

Halifax Regional Municipality

For over 60 years, John Macfie has been a cornerstone in his community, contributing both time and leadership to various organizations. His work with the Lake Echo Lions Club stands out, leading numerous fundraising projects and advocating for local causes with passion and dedication. A major achievement was leading the Lions and their Clubs from across Atlantic Canada in raising \$160,000 for the Nova Scotia Eye Center, ensuring they had the equipment needed for their essential work. John finalized a project to secure an emergency response vehicle used during the Swissair Flight 111 disaster cleanup. His efforts allowed organizations without liquor licenses to continue holding bingo games during the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling them to support those in need.

Beyond these significant accomplishments, John's leadership roles include Lions President, Secretary, and Provincial District Governor. With over 2,200 club visits, he provides invaluable guidance to new members, fostering the next generation of leaders. John's impact extends beyond his formal titles, as he is known as a reliable source of advice and support for Lions clubs across the province. His dedication to service is unmatched, with 36 years of perfect attendance and a legacy of making a lasting difference in his community and beyond.

Joyce Jiahuan Liu

Halifax Regional Municipality

For over eight years, Joyce Jiahuan Liu has been a dedicated leader and volunteer in Halifax, working tirelessly to strengthen community connections and celebrate cultural diversity. As a key member of the Chinese Benevolent Association of Nova Scotia (CBANS), she has helped organize flagship events including the Annual Chinese New Year Banquet, Summer BBQ, and seasonal visitations to seniors. In 2024, she co-hosted CBANS's 70th Anniversary Celebration, bringing together dignitaries and

community members to honor the organization's legacy with professionalism and pride.

Beyond her work with CBANS, Joyce has contributed to the Downtown Halifax Business Commission, advocating for marginalized entrepreneurs and fostering a more inclusive downtown. She is also the founder of the Taste Asia Food & Culture Festival, a signature event attracting more than 60,000 attendees annually to celebrate Asian culture through cuisine, performances, and business showcases.

Her leadership extends to the Canada Day Drumming Event, where she has united diverse communities through music and cultural exchange. Joyce's unwavering commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion has left an enduring mark on Halifax's cultural landscape. Through her vision, energy, and generosity, she continues to inspire others and build a stronger, more connected community.

Nick Yeoman

Halifax Regional Municipality

Nick Yeoman has been an integral volunteer leader in his community for over 15 years, consistently stepping into executive roles and offering his time to improve multiple organizations. As Vice Chair and Bar Manager for the LWF Community Hall, he is at the heart of the facility, leading renovations, organizing events, and ensuring its operations run smoothly. Nick's commitment extends to the local Volunteer Fire Department, where he serves as Chief, organizing training and attending numerous calls each year, all while inspiring new recruits to join and stay active.

Nick has revitalized the Keloose Annual Festival & Fair, turning it from a struggling event to a thriving community celebration by raising funds, recruiting volunteers, and fostering new leadership. His influence extends beyond his official roles, stepping in whenever needed, whether organizing food drives with Christmas Express or repairing roofs in urgent situations. Nick's endless energy, leadership, and ability to connect with people make him a cornerstone of his community, ensuring that organizations thrive and the community continues to grow stronger.

Sharon Arsenault

Halifax Regional Municipality

Sharon Arsenault has been an integral force in the Musquodoboit Valley, dedicating herself to improving the lives of her community members through decades of volunteer work. She has led youth initiatives like the PAUSE for Lunch program, helping to teach valuable lessons in nutrition while building a sense of community and teamwork among students. Sharon's impact extends to the senior population as well, where her involvement with the Well-Being Hub has supported aging adults and their caregivers. Additionally, she has been instrumental in fostering a culture of health and wellness throughout the Musquodoboit Valley through initiatives such as The Healthy Connections Wellness Show.

Beyond health initiatives, Sharon has been a longstanding volunteer with the Halifax County Exhibition, Riverside United Church, and a host of other organizations. Her leadership has helped organize events, create fundraising initiatives, and build partnerships that have enriched the community. Sharon's ability to mobilize people and her deep connections to the community have made her a trusted figure whose work continues to have a lasting impact. Through her tireless dedication and strategic vision, Sharon has cultivated a legacy of service, focusing on the Musquodoboit Valley remaining a strong, inclusive, and vibrant community for years to come.

Yasmin Hampshire

Halifax Regional Municipality

Yasmin Hampshire is a dedicated community volunteer whose leadership, creativity, and compassion have made a lasting impact. As a Youth Leader at the Needham Recreation Centre, she designed engaging activities for children, fostering a welcoming, inclusive environment. Her innovative programming boosted participation and strengthened community connections.

At school, Yasmin serves as Treasurer on her student council, managing funds with transparency and precision to support

events and initiatives. Her organizational and financial skills have earned the trust of both peers and faculty.

Beyond these roles, Yasmin contributes her time to organizations such as the Parker Street Food Bank and ADHSUM House. At Parker Street, she played a key role in organizing and distributing food during initiatives like Christmas in July and Back-to-School drives, ensuring families had the resources they needed. With ADHSUM House for Women and Children, Yasmin supported Pride events, reflecting her deep commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Through every role, Yasmin demonstrates a genuine passion for service and dedication to uplifting marginalized communities. Her contributions have strengthened the organizations she serves and inspires others especially youth to take action and make a difference.

Dale Bernard

Paqtnkek

Since its founding, Dale Bernard has been the heart and soul of the Paqtnkek Red Tribe Boxing Club. Dale commits himself fully to the athletes he trains, running boxing sessions three times a week and dedicating at least two additional days to fundraising efforts that keep the club alive and thriving. Whether it's selling tickets at Bayside on Fridays or hosting the weekly draw on Saturdays, Dale ensures the club has the resources it needs to operate. Dale's commitment goes far beyond coaching. He's out collecting bottles and cans to raise money, and he regularly reaches into his own pocket to buy sneakers, gloves, water, or even help cover travel costs for boxers competing across the Maritimes. His selflessness and drive have allowed countless young athletes to gain confidence, discipline, and purpose through the sport of boxing. Dale wears many hats — coach, fundraiser, mentor, and community leader — and he wears them all with humility and heart. The impact of his dedication is seen in every punch thrown, every medal earned, and every young life he's helped shape. Dale Berard is an irreplaceable pillar of the Paqtnkek and boxing communities, and a true champion for youth empowerment.

2025 Award Recipients

Fundy Region

Dick and Brenda McMullen

Municipality of Colchester County

Dick and Brenda McMullen are long-time residents of Londonderry and passionate community volunteers. Over the years, they have been deeply involved with the Londonderry Hall and were instrumental in organizing the first Londonderry Days, working alongside many others to bring the event to life. Since retiring, they've continued their commitment to community through the weekly Community Lunch program—providing meals, a welcoming space for social connection, and access to valuable health and wellness resources. Whether they're cooking, cleaning, delivering Meals on Wheels, or simply offering a warm smile, Dick and Brenda are always lending a helping hand. Their efforts create a space where everyone feels welcome and supported. Their dedication, kindness, and community spirit truly help break down barriers and bring people together. Londonderry is stronger because of them.

Karen Levy

Town of Stewiacke

Karen Levy has dedicated 19 years of volunteer service to the Shumilacke Food Bank.

Throughout her time with the organization, Karen has consistently demonstrated commitment, compassion, and initiative. Her responsibilities have included, but were not limited to:

- Sorting donations to ensure quality and proper distribution
- Delivering meals to individuals and families in need
- Registering families to receive support services

- Applying for funding to sustain and expand foodbank programs
- Coordinating and picking up donations from various sources
- Developing partnerships with external organizations to enhance resources and outreach
- Contributing to countless other tasks essential to the daily operation and long-term success of the food bank

Karen's long-standing service has had a profound impact on the community, and her dedication continues to inspire others.

Katie Hines

Municipality of East Hants

Katie Hines has been volunteering for her community for over 25 years.

Starting with Sparks and Brownies at 15, teaching Sunday School at 16, and joining the board of directors for the Nova Scotia Hemophilia Society at 17 where she stayed in various roles for 20 years.

Here, Katie founded and directed Maritime Adventures Camp, a 1-week overnight summer camp program for children living with bleeding disorders across the Maritimes.

She ran this program for 17 years before starting her own non-profit; Summer Camps Unplugged Society. Here, she hosts several summer camp programs as well as events throughout the school year that encourage kids to ditch their modern-day electronics and get outside and have some fun.

Katie is the Chair of East Hants Crime Prevention, where she has hosted community parades & is assisting in re-establishing a Citizens on Patrol program.

Katie is also on the East Hants Community Health board where she has attended & developed workshops and wellness fairs for several schools in the area.

Beyond this, Katie sits on the board of East Hants Youth Links and East Hants Homecoming Society where she is instrumental in developing and implementing youth programs throughout the corridor.

Ann M Fiddes and Samantha Cook Paul

Town of Truro

Founded in 2022 by Ann Fiddes and Samantha Cook Paul, the Wekope'kwitk Mijipjeweyuo'kuom Society Millbrook Food Bank began as a promise to fulfill the final wish of Ann's mother and Samantha's grandmother—to reconnect with the true meaning of community. What started in Ann's home as a simple effort to provide extra food has grown into a vital service supporting over 200 families each month.

Ann, Director and Co-founder, brings extensive experience from the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples and the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association. She understands the challenges of poverty and food insecurity in First Nations communities, where 53% of families on reserve face hardship. Under her leadership, the food bank now offers culturally grounded programs including a toy swap room, clothing room, and a mom-and-tot space.

Samantha, Assistant Director and Co-founder, is a behavioral specialist and CCA. She partners with Queen's University on research connecting dementia care to traditional foods and leads community initiatives such as "Elves for Elders," Back-to-School drives, and holiday events.

Together, Ann and Samantha dedicate over 30 volunteer hours each week, creating a supportive, culturally rich space that strengthens families and community connections.

Byron Smith

Town of Oxford

Byron Smith is fully committed to the betterment of the Town of Oxford. His dedication, volunteer spirit and his laughter make a lasting impact throughout the community.

He has assisted with the Oxford Legion events and volunteers countless hours with Oxford Minor Baseball. Last summer, he coached the undefeated U12 girls' team to a provincial championship. This year, he's taken on a new leadership role as

Vice President of the Oxford Minor Baseball board, where his organizational skills and positive energy are highly valued.

From the dugout to the board, Byron brings heart, enthusiasm, and structure to everything he does. He takes great pride in maintaining the baseball fields—lining, dragging, and preparing them to ensure every practice and game is top-notch.

Though Byron has no children of his own, his support for local youth is unwavering. If you're looking for him, you'll probably find him on the sidelines cheering on one of "his kids" in whatever sport they're playing.

Byron leads by example and helps shape the lives of young athletes through mentorship, encouragement, and passion. He is more than a volunteer—he is a role model and a true community hero.

Valerie Brown

Municipality of the County of Cumberland

Valerie Brown is a well-known and beloved community volunteer, recognized for her friendly, helpful attitude and her unwavering dedication to making the community a better place. Always eager to lend a hand, Valerie exemplifies the spirit of service. Whether walking dogs for neighbors or assisting local organizations, her generosity and patience have made a lasting impact. Valerie is involved in numerous community initiatives, including serving on the Community Health Board, assisting with Hospital Wayfinding, volunteering as a hospital patient visitor, and acting as a Cumberland Trails Steward for the Salt Express. She also leads hikes, serves as Treasurer for the Peace Branch Legion, and helps organize events like Harbourfest, the Gathering of the Clans, and Communities in Bloom. Valerie further contributes by visiting residents at the Sunset community and volunteering with Neighbourhood Watch. Her dedication and kindness inspire others to get involved and make a difference in the community.

Dwight Giddens

Village of Bible Hill

When a critical funding request was directed at Scotia Pool, Dwight Giddens sprang into action, dedicating over 200 hours to research, meetings, community engagement, and the creation of a sustainable business plan for the pool's future. He became the driving force behind negotiations with all levels of government and concerned patrons, all while keeping operations running smoothly. Dwight was the lead contact for media, stakeholders, and community members, ensuring transparency and momentum throughout the process. Thanks to Dwight's leadership and persistence, and support from various community partnerships, a new business model was presented and unanimously approved by council. Simply put, Scotia Pool remains open today because of Dwight's commitment, passion, and unparalleled volunteer spirit.

Dale Fawthrop

Town of Amherst

Dale Fawthrop is a retired teacher who has devoted much of his life to community leadership and volunteerism. A former town councilor for more than 19 years, he continues to serve the community in many ways without holding a formal title. Whether assisting at a community dinner, writing and directing a play to raise funds, sitting on a board, or leading an initiative, Dale's impact is wide-ranging.

He is the founder and chair of the Chignecto Arts Council, which promotes the arts in Cumberland. He has served on the YMCA Board for 16 years and, for his 80th birthday, completed an 80-minute accessible triathlon that raised more than \$3,000 for children's summer camps. In the last two years, Dale has written and directed five new plays, founded the We Remember Society to honour Canada's veterans through theatre, and directed a video commemorating the wartime experiences of five local residents.

As a volunteer with CFTA 107.9 FM, he has produced more than 2,000 maritime history radio shows. He also founded Club 180, which raises \$1,800 per month to pay the Amherst Food Bank's rent. Dale's dedication, creativity, and tireless commitment make him a proud and deserving representative of volunteerism in our community.

Jileen Julien

Millbrook First Nation

Jileen Julien was a beloved matriarch in our community, a light in an often dark world who always sought the good in people and situations. Her sudden passing in the fall of 2024 left a deep void in many hearts. Jileen volunteered in countless ways, showing up wherever she was needed. She was a community caterer, always present at events and gatherings, whether driving people, serving or cooking meals, or making everyone laugh.

During storms and power outages, she would open the warming or cooling centre at the Community Hall, prepare a hot meal, crack a joke to ease tension, and happily break into a karaoke song. Each summer, she was an integral part of the Summer Games Committee, feeding and caring for children, elders, and friends at the community tent while somehow making time to visit every ballfield and gymnasium within 20 kilometers to cheer on local teams.

Her grace, determination, and abundant love were unmatched. Jileen's motherly presence, care, and kindness will be greatly missed, but her legacy lives on in her children and sister cousins. She will always be our "Mama Jileen," and we are honoured to posthumously recognize her lasting contributions to our community.

2025 Award Recipients

Highland Region

Jodi Matlock

Town of Stellarton

Jodi Matlock is a pharmacist by trade and a lifelong community volunteer. She has served Pictou County for more than 30 years in many roles. A familiar face at the Pictou County YMCA, she has volunteered as an instructor in cycling and triathlon and more recently as a local running coach. She has been a long-standing volunteer with the Johnny Miles Running Events, promoting community wellness across the county. From 2016 to 2024, Jodi served on the YMCA Board of Directors, including two years as Chair.

A dedicated supporter of the Kinette Club of New Glasgow, Jodi was an active member from 1994 to 2015. She also contributed more than 20 years to the Northern Nova United Soccer Club and the Northumberland Regional High School Soccer program, creating opportunities for females in sport. In addition, she has volunteered for 10 years with CanSkate and six years as an Elementary School Fluoride Volunteer in Stellarton.

Professionally, Jodi serves on the Pharmacy Practice Committee for the Pharmacy Association of Nova Scotia and is a frequent guest lecturer for health groups, St. Francis Xavier University, and Dalhousie University. Her passion for service, both in her profession and in her community, is an inspiration to all.

Ed Kennedy

Municipality of Pictou County

Ed Kennedy participated in many boards and committees during his career but has been a particularly busy volunteer since retiring in River John in 2020. Kennedy has been a dedicated volunteer with the Municipality of Pictou County's Climate Change Advisory Committee since it was first formed and is now Vice Chair. He leads the Advisory Committee's Climate Action Subcommittee and is helping to set goals for the Municipality to reduce its carbon footprint. He has recruited others to be part of the committee, organized tree plantings and giveaways and lead engagement meetings to get public feedback on climate initiatives. He was the lead author of the 2025-2029 Municipality Climate Change Action Plan, which the County Council adopted on May 20th, 2025. Ed has also served as Chair of the Steering Committee for the Pictou County Chapter of Habitat for Humanity Nova Scotia and participated in the construction of homes in Stellarton and New Glasgow. In addition to that, he is on the Board of Directors of the River John Pickleball Club and the Editorial Board of the River John community newspaper, The Pioneer. The Municipality of Pictou County is pleased to present its 2025 Volunteer of the Year, Ed Kennedy.

Bill Landry

Town of Antigonish

Bill Landry, husband to Sarita and father to Maria and Sarah, joined the Fire Department in 1991. Over 34 years of service, he rose to the rank of 2nd Deputy Chief. In 2014, during the department's 150th anniversary, he was part of the committee responsible for refurbishing the old bell.

He joined the Knights of Columbus in 1992, became Grand Knight a decade later, and led the team that oversaw construction of the new John Paul Centre. As a member of the Columbus Club, he helped relocate the cenotaph from Chisholm Park to Columbus Field and continues to serve as recording secretary.

Bill has been secretary of the Cemetery Care Company since 2002 and played a key role in restoring the Pioneer Cemetery on Main. He joined the Antigonish Legion in 2008 and has helped with the poppy campaign for more than ten years. Through the Cenotaph Committee and Antigonish Heritage Museum, he researched and written about WWI veterans and an honour roll and is now documenting WWII veterans.

When asked about his service, Bill simply says, "That's not volunteer work, I like doing that!" His dedication, loyalty, and humility make him a true example of community service.

Nancy MacLean

Municipality of the District of Guysborough

Nancy MacLean is employed as a Regional Representative – Health & Safety Officer with the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC). She has been employed with the PSAC for over 30 years while being fully dedicated to her home community of Upper Big Tracadie.

Nancy volunteers with several community organizations; as an active member of Tracadie United Baptist Church (TUBC), recently elected Secretary of the TUBC Ladies Auxiliary, member of the Upper Big Tracadie Seniors Action Club, Dancing Grannies and Vice-President of the Birchtown Historical Association.

Nancy has been involved in many outreach projects in the community such as fundraising drives, a community vegetable garden project, a champion and community advocate for health and safety of residents in surrounding communities and dedicated time to the interpretation panel project in Upper Big Tracadie.

Karen Clifton

Municipality of the County of Antigonish

Karen Clifton is a devoted volunteer and executive member of the Dr. J. H. Gillis Regional High School Band Association in Antigonish. For the past three years, she has contributed countless hours to

organizing fundraisers, coordinating events, supporting student travel, and fostering a strong sense of community among band members. She is especially known for creating personalized swag items that bring joy and school spirit to students, thoughtful touches that make each member feel seen and valued.

Karen's ease in working with youth is supported by her educational background, holding diplomas in both Early Childhood Education and Developmental Services for Youth. Her professional training informs her compassionate and collaborative approach to volunteerism. In addition to her community involvement, she plays an active role in her family's businesses — BD Clifton Contracting Ltd. and Clifton Development Ltd., where her organizational skills and creative mindset continue to shine.

Karen brings warmth, dedication, and a spirit of service to everything she does, leaving a lasting impact on those around her.

Janice Gouthro

Town of Westville

Janice Gouthro is many things to many people, but what stands out is her commitment to the Food For Focus Program. She is an integral part of the group that provides healthy food every weekend to several elementary school families. Last growing season, Janice gave countless hours planting and tending to the vegetables grown in the community garden that were used in the program. Janice is a vital part of the group every step of the way, from keeping track of the families' dietary concerns, gathering funds, shopping and distribution. Over 100 bellies are filled every weekend because of Janice and her caring, loving ways. Janice shows compassion no matter what she does, whether it's organizing or lending a hand. She is involved in the Mitten Tree Initiative, which provides clothes for both church and school communities, as well as Emma's PJ Drive, UCW and the Sunday School nursery. Her remarkable leadership is driven by her innate ability to have great empathy for every human soul. Her actions always come from a place of caring. She embodies community spirit and is so very deserving of this recognition.

Sheila Hoeg

Town of New Glasgow

In 1984, Sheila Hoeg joined the Kinette Club of New Glasgow. Through Kin, Sheila has demonstrated her devotion to volunteering by fundraising for worthy causes: the Aberdeen Hospital, Multiple Sclerosis, Cystic Fibrosis, Breast Cancer, and Senior Outreach, just to name a few. She has sponsored 20 new Kinette members. Sheila served on the boards of Summer Street Industries and Family Services of Eastern Nova Scotia. Appointed by the Executive Council of Nova Scotia as a Public Member on the board of the College of Optometry, she served 3 terms. Her role on the board was to protect the public within the profession and its members. As an avid fan of the Pictou County Junior A Crushers Hockey Team, Sheila has volunteered as an usher for the past 20 years. In her professional life, Sheila was Coordinator of Community Support and Volunteer Services for VON Pictou County for 22 years, responsible for recruiting and training volunteers. Sheila's VON volunteers served on the Board of Directors, delivered hot meals to clients, drove clients to appointments, or assisted at the Adult Day Program. Although given Life Membership, the highest award in the KIN Canada association, Sheila remains an active Kinette member. She awaits volunteering again with the Crusher Hockey Association.

Mary Campbell

Town of Pictou

Mary Campbell was born in Westville, Nova Scotia in 1952 and moved to Pictou in 1974 after getting married. She has three children, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Mary has been volunteering for more than 40 years. A member of the United Church, she has contributed through the U. C. W. and by teaching messengers for seven years. She has also fundraised for United Way, Cancer Societies, Pictou Ringettes, and 4-H.

Several years ago, Mary and her husband joined the New

Horizons 55 Plus Club, where she served as President. She is currently a board member, head of darts, and part of the hospitality committee, helping set up events, cook meals, clean, organize, and restock. She contributes to Lunch and Learns, potlucks, dances, Mayor and Warden teas, Scottish teas, pancake breakfasts, and yard sales.

Mary worked for 35 years at the Maritime Odd Fellows Home as a P. C. W., specializing in dementia care. In retirement, she continues to serve her community by driving people to medical appointments, providing care after hospital stays, and supporting palliative care patients in hospitals, nursing homes, and her own home. Caring for others has been a lifelong passion, and her kindness and dedication are deeply value.

Bruce Sinclair

Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Bruce Sinclair is a sixth-generation dairy and sheep farmer residing in Goshen in the municipality of St. Mary's. Currently milking 80 cows and raising 100 breeding stock sheep on the 200-year-old family farm. The 7th and 8th generations are working and living on the farm to continue the legacy.

Bruce is currently Chair of the Eastern Nova Scotia Exhibition in Antigonish, showcasing agriculture to the public. He has been a 4-H leader for 35 years and continues to work and mentor youth with livestock projects. He currently sits or has sat on many local, provincial and national agriculture boards promoting sheep and dairy. He has been a board member of Antigonish Farmers' Mutual Insurance Company for 17 years.

Bruce has been a volunteer with the Goshen Fire Department for 33 years and Chief for the past 10 years. Besides the normal duties, motor vehicle accidents, structure fires, grass, brush and forest fires, water and ice rescue, medical first responder, he also procures grants and funding, ensures vehicles and equipment are maintained and that ongoing training and education continue for the department members. Because of his leadership, our department continues to serve our community.

Walter Smith

Town of Trenton

Walter Smith is a lifelong resident of Trenton and a pillar of our community. For over 38 years, Walter served Pictou County through his work with the Trenton and New Glasgow Police Departments, striving to act with integrity and dedication. Walter spent decades giving back through volunteering, a value instilled by his mother, Jessie Smith, values he and his wife, Alison, have passed to their children.

He's been involved with Trenton FunFest for over 25 years, served on the HCRS Board of Directors for 10 years, 5 as chairman. For 30 years he's been part of the PC Scotians and the NS Junior Hockey League. He's served on the Minor Sports Centre Revitalization Committee, Home and School programs, the Accessibility Committee, Diabetes Association, Heart and Stroke Foundation, and even coached basketball.

Walter's contributions go beyond titles. He quietly shovels driveways for neighbours, stepping in wherever there is a need. One of Walter's most important roles is a legal guardian for two beloved members of our community—Henry Green and Archie Kontuk. His mother, Jessie Smith, had a servant's heart, dedicating herself to her family and community. Her spirit lives on through Walter's service in the community. Walter says Trenton is where his heart is—and it shows.

Haley Bernard

Pictou Landing First Nation

Haley is a mother of 3 children. Haley has been an excellent role for everyone in our community for many years. She has dedicated her time to numerous events inside and outside of the community. Haley is also an excellent indigenous crafter who creates beautiful work, she has made many regalia's for the children in our community to dance, many of them being their first regalia's, she has also made children ribbon shirts for their special events, and does beautiful bead work. Haley has been in council in the past that required a lot of her time, but yet managed to juggle home, work and completing her education with grace and gratitude. She has gone above and beyond for everyone that she has interacted with and does it with a smile. She has been working hard on her teaching career by going to school for many years, and now is our community school principal. She also has a chair on the youth committee table and is the president of the Woman's Association for Pictou Landing. Haley is a wonderful asset to our community, and we are so lucky to have her.

Haley ne'siliji wunijink. Ki's sa'q Haley maw-klu'sit wji-napukwaluksin wutanminaq. Kagi-ika'lsit pikwelk koqoey teliaq ula wutanminaq aqq tami se'k. Haley natawa'gateket amaliteket kisitoq weltek koqoey, kisitoql l'nu'ktamkewe'l wjit ta'n kis-naskitaq amalkalti'tij nutqo'ltijik wutanminaq , pikwelkik amskwes mesnmi'tij l'nu'ktamkewey, aqq elt eliaji mijua'ji'jue'k saklo'pia'sijik a'tlaik wjit koqoey keknu'e'k teliaq, aqq weltekl elapska'tasikl kisitoql. Haley naspip nikana'luejik wutank ta'n pikweli-wsua'tuapn na'kwekml, katu me' ki'kajiw menaqaj tepo'tkipn wikuow, wtlukwaqn aqq kagi-kisa'tun tel-kina'masit. Piama'sit apoqnmuaaji wenik aqq me' newte' teli-wlikwetutk. Ki's sa'q attiknetk kina'masin nuji-kina'muemk, aqq nike' nikanus wjit kina'matnewo'kuo'm wutanminaq. Aqq elt naspit toqi-pma'tunew nutqo'ltijik mawaknutmamkl aqq Nikanus wjit Piktuk E'pitjik Mawio'mi. Haley keknuite'tasit tetuji wla'teket wutanminaq aqq weliknmakweyk weskweyu'k.

2025 Award Recipients

South Shore Region

Chuck Smith

Town of Yarmouth

Chuck Smith is a community-minded family man who is always willing to help. For decades, he has been a dedicated volunteer in the Yarmouth community. He is a member of the Greenville Community Hall Association, an organization that celebrates and uplifts the African Nova Scotian community. He was part of the fundraising group for the Yarmouth Black Soldiers of No. 2 Construction Battalion project and serves on the Board of the Sharon Assembly, a historic church being restored as a museum and community hub.

A former basketball player at Acadia University, Chuck brought his skills home to Yarmouth, where he and his brother have coached and organized basketball camps for more than 35 years. He has been inducted into the Town and County Sports Heritage Hall of Fame, named Yarmouth County Sports Volunteer of the Year, and has received both the National Coaching Canada 3M Coaches Award and the Cumulative Award for Basketball Nova Scotia Development.

Chuck also volunteers with Easter Seals' "Learn to Wheel" program, has coached champion minor baseball teams, and guided youth in creating their own community garden. His passion for helping others and his commitment to community service have made him a respected and deeply valued leader in Yarmouth.

Ellen Wathen

Town of Lunenburg

If there's a volunteer role in Lunenburg, Ellen Wathen has done it! For well over a decade, she has served a range of functions with a wide variety of volunteer groups in our community. Ellen's strong interest in the arts has driven her volunteering, with roles at the Lunenburg Art Gallery, the Boxwood Festival and the Lunenburg County Music Festival.

Perhaps her most notable contribution to the development of Lunenburg's music scene was the role she played as one of the founders of the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance (LAMP). Through LAMP, opportunities are provided for young graduate musicians to learn and refine their performance techniques under the guidance of world-renowned musicians. Over the past 11 years, LAMP has grown into a highly respected and well-regarded musical institution – in large part thanks to Ellen's continued involvement as a board member, fundraiser, frequent billeter and Chair of the Special Events Committee. In addition to the above, she has also volunteered for Rotary, the Lunenburg Community Consignment, which raises funds for local charities and is Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors of Harbourview Haven, a Community for Quality Care in Lunenburg.

Jennifer Spencer

Municipality of the District of Barrington

Jennifer Spencer is a passionate community builder, long-time advocate for rural agriculture, and dedicated volunteer with deep roots in Nova Scotia. As the former Recreation Director at Bayside Long-Term Care, she brought creativity and heart to her role, organizing events such as Christmas craft markets that brought joy to residents and strengthened community ties.

After transitioning to full-time homesteading, Jennifer established Yellow Brick Farm, a small family farm focused on agricultural heritage, sustainability, and intentional living. In 2017, she co-founded the Barrington Farmers Market, helping it grow from a handful of seasonal vendors into a vibrant weekly market with

more than 20 regular participants. Her leadership as president, and now vice-president, has shaped the market into a vital hub for local food, small businesses, and community connection.

Each year, Jennifer visits schools for Agriculture Literacy Month through the Department of Agriculture. She is an ambassador for “We Talk. We Grow.”, a mental health awareness campaign for Nova Scotia’s agricultural industry, and advocates for farmers through her local chapter of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, where she has served on the executive for five years. As a small farmer and part-time librarian, she champions food security and biodiversity through local seed preservation.

Jean Robinson

Region of Queens Municipality

Jean Robinson is an outstanding volunteer whose contributions have had a lasting impact on Queens County. A champion of the arts, Jean has played a central role in the Region’s cultural life as Chair of the Liverpool International Theatre Festival and as a community theatre producer with both the Astor Theatre Society and Winds of Change Dramatic Society. She has also served as the executive of the Queens County Girls Choir, as Chair of Queens County Seafest, and founder/chair of the South Shore Festival of the Arts. Beyond the arts, Jean has been an active volunteer on a range of school and community boards and committees, including South Queens Junior High, Dr. John C. Wickwire Academy, and the Region of Queens Physical Activity Strategy Working Group. Her commitment reflects a deep belief in the power of community engagement. In January 2025, Jean received the King Charles III Coronation Medal in recognition of her service to the arts. Her guiding philosophy is simple yet powerful: “Giving back and volunteering builds the foundation of a healthy community, making it a better place for all of us to live, work, and play.”

Donna Spinney

Municipality of the District of Argyle

Donna Spinney's volunteer activities were encouraged by her mother at an early age. She was part of School committees, successfully lobbying to have French as a second language as part of the curriculum in Argyle school.

Donna is also part of the Mac n' Cheese program at the Wesleyan church, which feeds up to 300 students weekly.

Donna's work with the Argyle Horizons group began some years ago when their cook for the Seniors' meals, retired. Since then, our community helpers have increased in number, resulting in an increase in our monthly Seniors meals from serving 25 meals to over 50 meals monthly. She has organized informative speakers on topics of interest to Seniors.

Donna is the director of the Argyle-Glenwood Hall and has helped with fundraising for the hall with grants and organizing activities, which resulted in increased hall usage.

Being a volunteer for one's community is rewarding and challenging. Donna has had the privilege of meeting and working with a great number of people that I would not otherwise have had the opportunity to meet. She has come to appreciate the diverse talents and strengths of people. Communities come together and are strengthened by the kindness and efforts of all of us.

Nancy Thomas

Town of Shelburne

Nancy Thomas has dedicated many years to supporting her community. Her commitment and generosity have made a lasting impact on several local organizations and initiatives. With over 30 years of service with the Shelburne Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary, Nancy has taken on leadership roles such as President and Secretary. Her dedication doesn't stop there—she's also been an active member of the Shelburne Curling Club for the last 25 years, where she served as President of the Ladies Curling

Club. Nancy has also been busy volunteering with the Roseway Hospital Foundation Auxiliary for the past 9 years and has given her time for several years at NU2U, always ready to lend a helping hand. Nancy's kindness extends beyond her own community — she knits finger puppets for the IWK and hats for the Lions Club, spreading care to those in need. Whether she's golfing, curling, knitting, doing jigsaw puzzles, or volunteering, Nancy pours her heart into everything she does.

Margeson Reeves

Municipality of the District of Chester

Margeson Reeves has been a volunteer his whole adult life, including Member & Vice-President of the New Ross Regional Development Society (NRRDS), and member of the New Ross Fire Commission, New Ross Historical Society, and the Chester Municipal Planning Advisory Committee. For over 25 years, he has played a large role on the NRRDS Christmas Festival Committee by adding to the beautification and festive spirit of the community with the many hours he contributes to ensure the community Christmas Tree and Wreaths are installed and decorated. The festival is not a fundraiser for the NRRDS as such, but other community groups benefit from the festival by hosting money-making events, businesses, and individuals such as restaurants, tree lots, artists, and craftspeople benefit from increased business. Margeson's volunteer activities have had a huge impact on the community, and his work is very much appreciated.

Jenny Sandison

Town of Mahone Bay

Jenny Sandison moved here in 1992 and opened her very successful English Garden Design Company, and she is a member of Landscape Nova Scotia. Her property has become a showpiece, and she graciously opens her garden to visiting garden clubs, also during the annual Home and Garden tour fundraiser for the Museum. Jenny helped establish the Mahone Bay Garden Club in 1999. She became the treasurer in 2013 and the President

in 2016. She is a popular presenter at garden club meetings throughout the province. Under her leadership, the garden club has thrived. She organizes the annual garden club plant sale with proceeds going to the beautification of our town, including flower baskets and benches. Jenny maintains the town gardens and annually organizes a cleanup of the town gardens. In 2024, Jenny joined the Communities In Bloom committee and helped the town receive the national award for community participation. Recently, she joined the Edgewater Street Project - Landscaping Working Group. Jenny is an active member of St. James Anglican Church and provides arrangements with flowers from her garden. Jenny is a valued member of our town

The Lower Ohio Recreation Centre

Municipality of the District of Shelburne

The Lower Ohio Recreation Centre represents a group of volunteers that operates and manages the Robert A. Bower Recreational Field, a ball field located in Lower Ohio, Shelburne. For the past two years, they have been working hard to complete major upgrades to the field, which is utilized by community members and ball players of all ages for games, practices, and tournaments. They have been guided by a vision to make the field a place not just for playing sports, but also for members of the community to use for recreation, physical activity and social activities. This past spring, they completed upgrades that included repositioning the ball diamond, new fencing around the field, upgraded dugouts, parking lot expansion, and a walking track. The project has cost approximately \$250,000 and has been funded by a combination of grants, fundraising and in-kind donations. Led by their volunteer board, members have put in countless hours project planning, meeting with partners, consulting with the community and field users, applying for grants, organizing fundraisers, managing contractors and in some cases, on the ground doing the work. The result is a quality recreation facility that will benefit not only the local community but all of Shelburne County.

Kerry Muise

Municipality of the District of Yarmouth

Kerry Muise is a true pillar of support in the Yarmouth region. A tireless volunteer and respected leader, her contributions have touched countless lives, making her an outstanding choice for Representative Volunteer for the Municipality of the District of Yarmouth. Raised to believe in the importance of helping others, Kerry began volunteering early in life, and her passion for service has only grown stronger.

She has served as president of both the Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce and the local Rotary Club, demonstrating exceptional leadership and dedication. As chair for doctor recruitment, she has advocated to ensure residents have access to essential healthcare. Kerry also played a pivotal role in raising funds for a new pool and fitness centre, helping to spearhead a \$10 million campaign to make the project a reality.

Her volunteer efforts include organizing Rotary Ribfest, contributing to the 2024 World Acadian Congress, and supporting the Rotary Meals on Wheels program, which delivers hot meals to the elderly. Whether leading large-scale community initiatives or lending a hand through small acts of kindness, Kerry's commitment is unwavering. She is a driving force in Yarmouth, and her generosity, leadership, and dedication continue to inspire all who have the privilege of working alongside her.

Nancy Williams

Town of Lockeport

Nancy Williams has a bright and bubbly personality and is often seen volunteering wherever needed. Nancy has been a vital part of our annual July 1st Committee, always willing to help, fundraise, and give freely of her time. She organizes the annual July 1st: Children's parade, pie eating contest, the Seniors Social, gathers sponsors, and happily takes on whatever tasks are required. Nancy also volunteers at Surf Lodge Nursing Home, our local Long Term Care facility. Nancy's friendly nature always has the residents smiling as she helps with social activities or just pops

in to visit a resident who needs some cheering up. Nancy has been a huge asset to the Recreation Committee, offering to make sandwiches and sweets for Seniors Bingo, helping with tea and coffee in the kitchen, or any last-minute requests for assistance. Nancy's dedication as a volunteer to her community is something we should all aspire to. She is an excellent example of what volunteering means.

Sheila Woodcock

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

Sheila Woodcock is a tireless community leader; arts advocate and founding member of the Lunenburg Foundation for the Arts (LFA). For over 13 years, Sheila has worked diligently to grow and strengthen the organization, which plays a crucial role in supporting artists across Lunenburg County. Through her leadership, the LFA has become a beacon for the local arts community, providing meaningful grants that empower artists to create and thrive. Beyond her work with the LFA, Sheila has made significant contributions to the local arts scene by co-founding the Lunenburg Cultural Collective and as a Board member for the Nova Scotia Folk Art Society. Her volunteer commitments also extend to serving the last 4 years on the IWK Health Centre Board of Directors and contributing to the development of standards for medical laboratories through CSA and ISO internationally. Sheila's dedication, leadership, and unwavering commitment to her community is truly inspiring. Her work continues to inspire those around her, and her tireless efforts serve as a model of service and leadership for future generations.

Trudy Johnson

Town of Bridgewater

Trudy Johnson has been an active volunteer in our community for many years and in many different roles. Former educator, Trudy made a career of nurturing, teaching and supporting our youth as both a teacher and principal and continues to enhance lives through her past and current volunteer roles. Award of Merit

winner for her work as co-founder of the Foundation for Youth Support, a program for adolescents affected by addiction issues, led to a partnership that provided for school-based addiction counselors.

Past community involvement included Board member of the Family Support Centre; Chair of Interagency Committee of Lunenburg County; South Shore Health – Hospital Accreditation Team Community Member, Second Story Women’s Centre board member, Secretary Treasurer for Autism Nova Scotia Lunenburg Chapter, Board Member and Chair for the Health Services Foundation of the South Shore, and most recently a founding member and board chair of the South Shore Hospice Palliative Care Society, which is spearheading the development of the hospice unit at Fishermen’s Memorial Hospital.

Trudy received many letters of support for her nomination, and shares with you some of the words used to describe her: quietly persistent, instrumental, kind, generous, tireless, humble, “a gem”, volunteer extraordinaire, caring, dedicated.

2025 Award Recipients

Valley Region

Monette Bourdrea and Maria Hanna

Municipality of Clare

For over 25 years, Monette Bourdrea and Maria Hannah have been sharing their passion for dance and Acadian culture with the youth of our region. They manage the dance troupe La Baie en Joie, where they teach dances, create new choreography, support performers during shows and trips, and go above and beyond with extra practice sessions and at-home resources for dancers. They help create unforgettable experiences and opportunities for these young dancers. Their efforts were especially felt last summer during the 45th anniversary of La Baie en Joie, where they helped bring together past and present dancers for moving performances and a beautiful costume display. They also participated actively in the Congrès mondial acadien, contributing to several shows. Beyond passing down Acadian traditions, Monette and Maria inspire the next generation by encouraging young people to get involved themselves and give back to their community through volunteering.

Rosanne Brewer

Town of Kentville

Rosanne Brewer is the Chair of the Oakdene Park Community Garden Group and a retired nurse whose leadership is grounded in care, community spirit, and a strong commitment to lifelong learning. Although new to gardening when she stepped into her role, Rosanne has embraced the journey with enthusiasm, quickly gaining skills and helping nurture a vibrant, inclusive space for people of all ages and backgrounds. Beyond her leadership of the garden itself, Rosanne has been instrumental in organizing

major community events, including the OPCGG Halloween Hunt, which welcomed over 200 participants, and the Oakdene Park Spring Fling, which saw more than 300 attendees. She has also championed fundraising efforts to sustain and grow the garden's programs and infrastructure. Under Rosanne's guidance, the Garden Group has built important collaborations with community partners such as the Kings County Family Resource Centre, NSCC, the Kentville Lions Club, the Edge on Employment, and the Valley Community Learning Association. Her ability to foster partnerships, lead successful initiatives, and build community connections has had a lasting and positive impact on Kentville. Rosanne's dedication, compassion, and leadership continue to inspire the flourishing of the Oakdene Park Community Garden.

Tara LeBlanc

Town of Berwick

Tara LeBlanc is a dedicated and community-minded leader who brings passion and purpose to everything she does. As Group Commissioner for 2nd Berwick Scouts, she ensures the program runs smoothly and that every youth involved is getting a meaningful and well-rounded experience. She works behind the scenes to support volunteers, organize activities, and keep the group engaged, active, and thriving. Tara is also deeply committed to community involvement beyond Scouting. She's quick to find ways for her group to give back—whether through local fundraisers, community cleanups, or helping out with events. She believes strongly in supporting others and often connects the Scouts with local businesses and service projects to build partnerships and encourage civic engagement. She's a familiar face at events like Berwick Gala Days and can always be counted on to show up, lend a hand, and cheer others on. Tara's energy, reliability, and love for getting involved have made her a cornerstone of community life. Whether she's volunteering, organizing, or simply showing up to support, Tara helps make Berwick a more connected, caring, and vibrant place for everyone.

Stephen Hawboldt

Town of Annapolis Royal

For several decades, Stephen Hawboldt has been an active volunteer in the Annapolis Royal area, being involved in dozens of community projects, including early development of arts and crafts, the Annapolis Royal Historic Gardens, the Annapolis Field Naturalists and others. His most recent efforts include founding the Annapolis Walks group within the Walk Nova Scotia initiative. The Annapolis group now includes five trained leaders offering twice-weekly walks along the many scenic walking trails in the community. He assisted in the creation of the Town's network of nature trails. He has been a volunteer usher at King's Theater and assists at the Annapolis Royal Food Bank. With a professional background in environmental management, he is now an active citizen member of the Town of Annapolis Royal Environmental Advisory Committee, which is supporting community efforts to migrate and adapt to climate change.

Heather Baxter

Town of Middleton

Heather Baxter is the proud owner of Heather's Your Independent Grocer in Middleton, but to the community, she is so much more. A tireless volunteer, generous supporter, and passionate advocate for local initiatives, Heather embodies the spirit of service in everything she does. She is an active member of the Middleton Fireflies, supporting the Middleton Fire Department through countless volunteer efforts.

Heather is a constant presence at town events, from handing out water at the Middleton Heart Run to serving dinner at the Century Ride and joining parades in Middleton and Lawrencetown. She fundraises for President's Choice Charities and regularly donates her time, store space, and products to community events of all sizes. She has provided snacks for the first Neighbourhood Watch meeting, hosted a free cupcake decorating station at the tree lighting, and offered prizes for contests and challenges.

Heather opens her store to local groups raising funds or awareness, creating a welcoming and inclusive space. A local runner and motivator, she encourages participation regardless of experience or ability. Her positivity, generosity, and community spirit make her a beloved figure and a driving force in Middleton, and we are proud to nominate her for this volunteer award.

Kevin West

Town of Wolfville

Kevin West is a dedicated keeper of heritage and culture in our community. He volunteers with the Macdonald House restoration project, supports the Deep Roots Music and Devour Festivals, and contributes to Stage Prophets Theatre, the West Brooklyn Speakeasy, and the Avondale Full Circle Music Festival. Kevin is a self-proclaimed Haywire mechanic and folk art creator who helps bring the arts to those who are more vulnerable in our community.

He serves as a facilitator for Memory Café Nova Scotia, a provincial nonprofit that supports well-being and social inclusion for people living with dementia. For the past six years, Kevin has facilitated the Wolfville/Kentville Memory Café, and this year launched a new café in Berwick. His warmth and steady leadership have helped spread memory cafés beyond the Annapolis Valley and across the province.

Kevin also co-created a video that guides rural communities in starting their own memory cafés, expanding the program's reach and impact. He is kind, highly reliable, and skilled at engaging people across all stages of life. Kevin does not see disability as an impediment to meaningful human connection, and we are delighted to nominate him for his remarkable contributions to community and culture.

Yvonne Mullen

Town of Digby

Yvonne Mullen is a very involved great-grandparent and works hard to stay involved. Upon retiring from nursing, she has given even more time to the community. She attends all Digby Elementary Home and School and Student Advisory Council meetings, and whenever possible helps with fundraisers and school events. She volunteers with Digby Scallop Days Association as a board member, Learning Grove Child Care Centre, where she is on the advisory council, Wharf Rat Rally, Digby Housing Coalition, and Digby Family Centre. If all that is not enough, Yvonne finds the time to crochet lap blankets for the QE2 Palliative Care Unit and knits hats for preemie babies at the IWK and chicks for the residents at Tideview Terrace for Easter.

Jeff Thompson

Municipality of the District of Digby

Jeff Thompson is one of the longest-standing and active members of the Westport Volunteer Fire Department. As a volunteer firefighter for over 40 years, he is the current captain and past deputy chief. Jeff has driven the fire engine to countless calls. He has taken on the care of the engines and trucks. With Jeff's 40 years of service, he possesses extensive experience and knowledge that is invaluable to the department, and profound impact on the community.

Rob Davies

West Hants Regional Municipality

As an award-winning science teacher known for his humor and dedication, Rob Davies has inspired countless students. In the early 2000s, he served as a Nunavut Youth Abroad Program board member, helping youth prepare for post-secondary education. He now co-chairs the Annapolis Valley Regional Science Fair, encouraging a love of science in local schools. Rob also volunteers in elementary schools and summer camps, performing animated

science demonstrations. In 2025, he served as honorary co-chair for the Hants County Christmas Angels, raising a record amount of funds for local families at Christmas. For over 20 years, Rob has been a well-loved coach in hockey, soccer, basketball, softball, and baseball, and has played multiple roles with the West Hants Warriors Hockey Association. He is known for ensuring all youth, regardless of background or gender, have access to sports. Notably, he has helped increase the number of girls playing hockey and baseball in West Hants, as he fosters and advocates for those facing barriers. Rob's commitment exemplifies the vibrant spirit of West Hants. Congratulations, and thank you for your outstanding contributions to the community.

David Hovell

Village of Port Williams

Committed to positive youth development, David Hovell is a local 4-H Club Leader and past Chair of 4-H Canada and the Canadian 4-H Foundation. He chaired events for the 2017 Global 4-H Summit and led 4-H Canada's Accreditation Committee. For decades, he has been the announcer and ringmaster for the Nova Scotia 4-H Show and is now chairing the inaugural ROOTED Gala supporting 4-H Nova Scotia.

In his community, David was treasurer of the Starrs Point Cemetery Committee, a member of the Port Williams Park Planning Committee and led the 2022 Horton High Graduation Community Parade Committee.

He has served as Director of the Annapolis Valley Apple Blossom Festival, Acadia University Foundation, Acadia University Alumni Association, Annapolis Valley District Health Authority and is past Chair of the Valley Regional Hospital Foundation.

Professionally, David is a Director of the Tourism Association of Nova Scotia and a member of the Annapolis Valley Regional Tourism Committee, Wine Growers Association of Nova Scotia and Taste of Nova Scotia.

Melissa Wade

Municipality of the County of Annapolis

Melissa Wade has demonstrated outstanding dedication and commitment to volunteerism, making a significant impact with the Special Olympics. Her selfless contributions and tireless efforts have empowered the community and inspired those around her. For the past 18 years, Melissa has been deeply engaged with the Special Olympics, serving as a Regional Coordinator. In this role, she oversees the organization of coaches and volunteers, coordinates fundraising events, and ensures the smooth operation of the organization. Her work in mentoring, organizing events, fundraising and advocacy has led to the Special Olympics being honored as a cornerstone of the community. Beyond her hands-on involvement, Melissa consistently goes above and beyond, embodying the values of leadership, compassion and service. Her ability to overcome obstacles and bring people together in the disability support community has made a lasting difference in the lives of many.

Helen Seymour

Municipality of the County of Kings

Helen Seymour has been instrumental in launching “Centre 130,” a community outreach initiative based at our newly renovated church, aimed at supporting the unhoused in our area. With the addition of a fully accessible shower, laundry facilities, and a kitchen, Centre 130 provides essential services to those in need. In response to the housing crisis, Helen led efforts to make our space available for showers, laundry, and meals, while also negotiating with Open Arms to use our facility for emergency shelter during extreme weather. Helen, along with a team, coordinated vital training for volunteers, including St. John Ambulance First Aid, Naloxone administration, defibrillator use, Mental Health First Aid, and upcoming de-escalation training, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment. Thanks to Helen’s unwavering leadership, we now offer weekly programming and drop-in services in partnership with Open Arms, supporting

individuals with laundry, showers, clothing, sleeping bags, and toiletries. This past winter, the church opened as an emergency shelter during two severe weather events. While Helen credits the collective efforts of many, her dedication, compassion, and initiative have been the driving force behind Centre 130, making a lasting impact in the lives of the unhoused and underhoused in our community.

Cathy White

Bear River First Nation

Cathy White is a dedicated cat rescuer and a very busy mom with a job, who still manages to find time to rescue large numbers of cats every year despite her hectic schedule. Cathy has rescued cats at all hours, in all seasons, and under all conditions. She has handled very challenging situations with a rare combination of grace, tact, knowledge, tenacity, and resourcefulness. She's a tireless friend to innocent cats in need of help. An excellent networker, Cathy, has woven together resources with partnering organizations and programs to bring large-scale rescues to successful completion. She has been a crucial part of the Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) and rescue efforts of Friends of Ferals and Cats For Keeps in Digby and Annapolis Counties. Dozens of cats are now treasured family members in happy homes thanks to her rescues. When funds are scarce, she fundraises to assist with paying the vet bills. Furthermore, due to her efforts, many cats have received spays and neuters to prevent disease and suffering.

A series of thin, light gray wavy lines that flow vertically down the left side of the page, creating a sense of movement and elegance.

2025 Specialty Award Recipients



Newcomer Volunteer Award

Maria Ivy Jovellanos

Maria Ivy Jovellanos immigrated to Canada less than five years ago and quickly embraced Nova Scotia as her home. She became actively involved in the community, most notably through her volunteer work with the 2023 Lawn Summer Nights fundraiser in Halifax, supporting Cystic Fibrosis Canada, a cause close to her heart.

Coordinated through KPMG Halifax, where she served as OMP, Maria took great pride in contributing to an event that raised funds and awareness for families affected by cystic fibrosis. She viewed this work as both an honour and a responsibility to her new community.

Adjusting to a new country and culture is no small feat, yet Maria has shown resilience and generosity throughout. She has given her time freely, built strong community ties, and exemplified the spirit of volunteerism that enriches Nova Scotia.

Her story highlights the positive impact newcomers bring: compassion, service, and the determination to turn challenges into opportunities for connection and contribution.



Youth Volunteer Award

Cyril Jurdak O'Brien

Cyril has been heavily involved with the Dalhousie Medical Students' Society for 2 years, having served as the Vice-President External. Currently, he is the Atlantic Regional Director for the Canadian Federation of Medical Students. While participating in the National Day of Action, Cyril advocated for Nova Scotians

by speaking directly to members of Parliament and the Senate, discussing ways to better optimize healthcare spending across the country. On a local level, Cyril has volunteered with the HRM Youth Advisory Committee the last 4 years, serving two terms as Chair, and currently as vice-chair of the committee. During this time, Cyril has focused on youth empowerment, sustainability, education, and social justice, helping shape policies on safe housing for youth, mental health, and climate action. As Chair of the committee, Cyril engaged stakeholders regarding by-law M-200, which focuses on safe housing standards, and worked with HRM staff to educate youth and newcomers on their rights as tenants. Cyril has also been involved in Dalhousie Medicine's Euphoria performances each of the last two years. Euphoria is a musical show put on by the medical school that raises money for charity. Cyril was involved both as an actor, recently as Dr Phil in this past year's edition, and contributed to the school's fundraising efforts. Dalhousie's Medical School program has collectively raised over \$100,000 over the last two years for local charities, most recently being ADSUM House. Finally, Cyril has been an exemplary leader and volunteer, having demonstrated a deep commitment to community. Cyril has spent several years giving back to the officiating community as a referee mentor and supervisor. Cyril has worked to recruit, develop and retain more female officials in Halifax. Cyril's efforts helped bring about the first "female-only" referee clinic this season for new officials, resulting in Metro West having its largest incoming cohort of female officials in the association's history. This has helped dozens of new young officials receive gainful employment at a time where youth are having difficulties finding jobs.



Family Volunteer Award

Leard Family

No matter what time of day or night, when the call comes out, and pagers and phones are buzzing, our house gets busy in a hurry. Three department

members, my husband and 2 grown children hustle to a vehicle, load up and they're off. I stay close by to gather my auxiliary ladies to be ready to prepare some nourishment upon their return. The conversation at our supper table about these calls, chatter about training and courses, and all issues department related has added such a new dynamic to our conversations. Our involvement in both organizations has created yet another bond that we share.

When they get called out to a fire, and I watch all three of them hurry out of our home, of course I worry. I'm anxious. I'm nervous. However, knowing the other department members, and the bonds that they also share with my family, I trust that their safety is priority. They will have, and provide, the support, the assistance, and the protection that will bring them all home safely. This security reaches beyond teamwork-it's on a level of its own.

We're incredibly fortunate to live in the small community of Wallace. Most everyone is familiar to us, so when an alarm is sounded for a local location, chances are great that they're going to know who it is that needs assistance. During that time, when people are rushing into your house, you're frightened, and there's an incredible amount of chaos and uncertainty, I believe that seeing a familiar face or two would improve the situation immensely.

We volunteer with many fantastic volunteers-people we may not have met otherwise. New friends that have become family. We've learned things that we may not have learned otherwise. We volunteer as a family, and have received so many rewards in return.



Nova Scotia Strong Award **Blaise Sampson**

Blaise Sampson has served with the St. Peter's Volunteer Fire Department for thirty-five years as a firefighter and first responder. His loyalty and dedication to the community have never wavered.

Known for his kindness and compassion, Blaise's ability to stay calm and professional in crises has made him a trusted first responder.

His care was especially evident during a recent family emergency, where his thoughtful response left a lasting impact.

Beyond emergency calls, Blaise supports his community in countless ways. He frequently attends fundraising events, freely donates his carpentry skills, and offers help wherever it's needed. His generosity is widely recognized.

Blaise follows in the footsteps of his late mother, who founded the St. Peter's Food Bank, still thriving today. Her legacy of service continues through him.

After decades of commitment and care, Blaise remains humble. His contributions make him deeply deserving of recognition as an outstanding volunteer.



Artist for the 2025 Nova Scotia Strong Award **Loretta Gould**

Her art is spiritual and it is said it's a dream to see bright, beautiful colors. Her first paintings sold in Finland and Germany. She spent her whole life creating with fabric, photos, and acrylics. She is self-taught and has been creating and exhibiting her work ever since. Loretta's dream is to share her art around the world. It is a way to get her spiritual feelings on canvas.

She was born and raised in Cape Breton, raised in a reservation by her parents. The Waycobah First Nation is located in Nova Scotia. She currently resides in Cape Breton with her husband Elliot Gould and all their children - Dakota Jay (1994), Shianne Snow (1996), Savannah Sipu (1998), Phoenix Lee (2000), Ivy Blue (2004), and Montanna Sky (2015). She is currently working on a book for all the stories that go with each of her paintings, and 2 children books to learn our native tongue.

Take a moment to view her artwork here
<https://mikmaq-artist.com>