



*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



It is a great honour, as His Majesty The King's representative in Nova Scotia, to recognize the recipients of the Provincial Volunteer Awards in this United Nations Year of the Volunteer. This international moment of recognition underscores something deeply rooted in our province: a longstanding tradition of showing up for one another.

Today's honourees represent the very best of that tradition. Through your dedication, you strengthen the fabric of communities across Nova Scotia—often in ways that are not always visible, but always deeply felt. Your efforts remind us that meaningful change is most often built through steady, compassionate action over time.

Volunteerism in Nova Scotia is not defined by a single act, but by a shared commitment to care—for our neighbours, our environment, and the spaces we call home. Whether supporting those in need, championing inclusion, or preserving the natural beauty of our province, your contributions help create communities where people feel connected and supported.

The United Nations' Year of the Volunteer invites us to see these local efforts as part of something much larger. Across the world, volunteers are shaping stronger, more resilient societies—and here in Nova Scotia, you are an essential part of that global story. Your work demonstrates how generosity at the community level can ripple outward in powerful ways.

In travelling throughout the province, I am continually struck by the depth of commitment shown by volunteers. There is a quiet determination in your work—a readiness to contribute, often without recognition, simply because it is needed. That spirit speaks volumes about the character of this province.

To all those being recognized, and to every volunteer across Nova Scotia, please accept my sincere thanks. Your contributions enrich our communities and set a powerful example for others.

You embody the spirit of service that defines Nova Scotia at its very best.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Mike Savage".

Mike Savage, ONS
Lieutenant Governor



Message from the Premier of Nova Scotia



Welcome to the 2026 Provincial Volunteer Awards.

Today, we celebrate those whose generosity helps shape the Nova Scotia we know and love. In every corner of our province, volunteers strengthen communities, create opportunities and help others feel connected and supported. It can be a single act of kindness or years of

dedicated service – their contributions have a profound impact.

This gathering is an opportunity to recognize those among us who step forward when help is needed. You see possibility when others see a barrier. You lead by example, turning caring into action and inspiring those around you to get involved.

Volunteering continues to evolve alongside our communities. Today's volunteers are helping newcomers feel welcome, supporting local events and organizations, protecting cultural traditions, promoting inclusion and building stronger, healthier communities for everyone. These efforts bring people together and help create a sense of belonging. This is at the heart of Nova Scotia's identity.

Congratulations to the honourees and our sincere thanks for everything you do. Lastly, as we honour this year's award recipients, we also recognize the thousands of other volunteers across the province. Their work may not always be visible, but their impact is felt every day by families, neighbours and communities.

On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, thank you for building a brighter future for our province.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Tim Houston". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tim" being more prominent than the last name "Houston".

Honourable Tim Houston
Premier of Nova Scotia



Message from the Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage



Congratulations to the recipients of the 2026 Provincial Volunteer Awards. Thank you for your commitment to make Nova Scotia stronger, more resilient and more caring.

This year, we're proud to mark 52 years of honouring volunteers. Your countless acts of service and generosity have shaped communities right across the province. As a volunteer, you give back in so many ways – sharing your time, your talent and your heart.

Volunteers strengthen our province by showing up where help is needed. Many Nova Scotians know that a welcoming event, a safe program, a meal delivered, a ride offered or a call made at the right time can change someone's day and help them feel connected.

Thank you for your dedication, for staying involved when the work is hard, and for helping people see that they are not alone. You may not always see the difference you make, but your efforts are noticed and are an inspiration to so many across the region.

This afternoon, I express my sincere gratitude for all that you do. Volunteers are the foundation of a resilient, compassionate and vibrant Nova Scotia.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Ritcey'.

Dave Ritcey
Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

Order of Events

Monday, September 28th, 2026

Opening performance

Traditional Dragon Dance

Opening remarks

Emcee Juanita Peters

Halifax Multicultural Drummers

Blessing

Theresa Meuse

Lieutenant Governor Mike Savage Annual Address

**Dave Ritcey – Minister of Communities, Culture,
Tourism and Heritage**

Volunteer Representative Awards

Cape Breton Region, Central Region

Damini Awoyiga – Spoken Word Poet

Volunteer Representative Awards, continued

Fundy Region, Highland Region

Celtic Dance Performance

Volunteer Representative Awards, continued

South Shore Region, Valley Region

Speaker – Hope Swinimer

Introduction of the Specialty Awards Judging Committee

Specialty Awards Presentations

Newcomer Volunteer of the Year

Youth Volunteer of the Year

Family volunteer of the Year

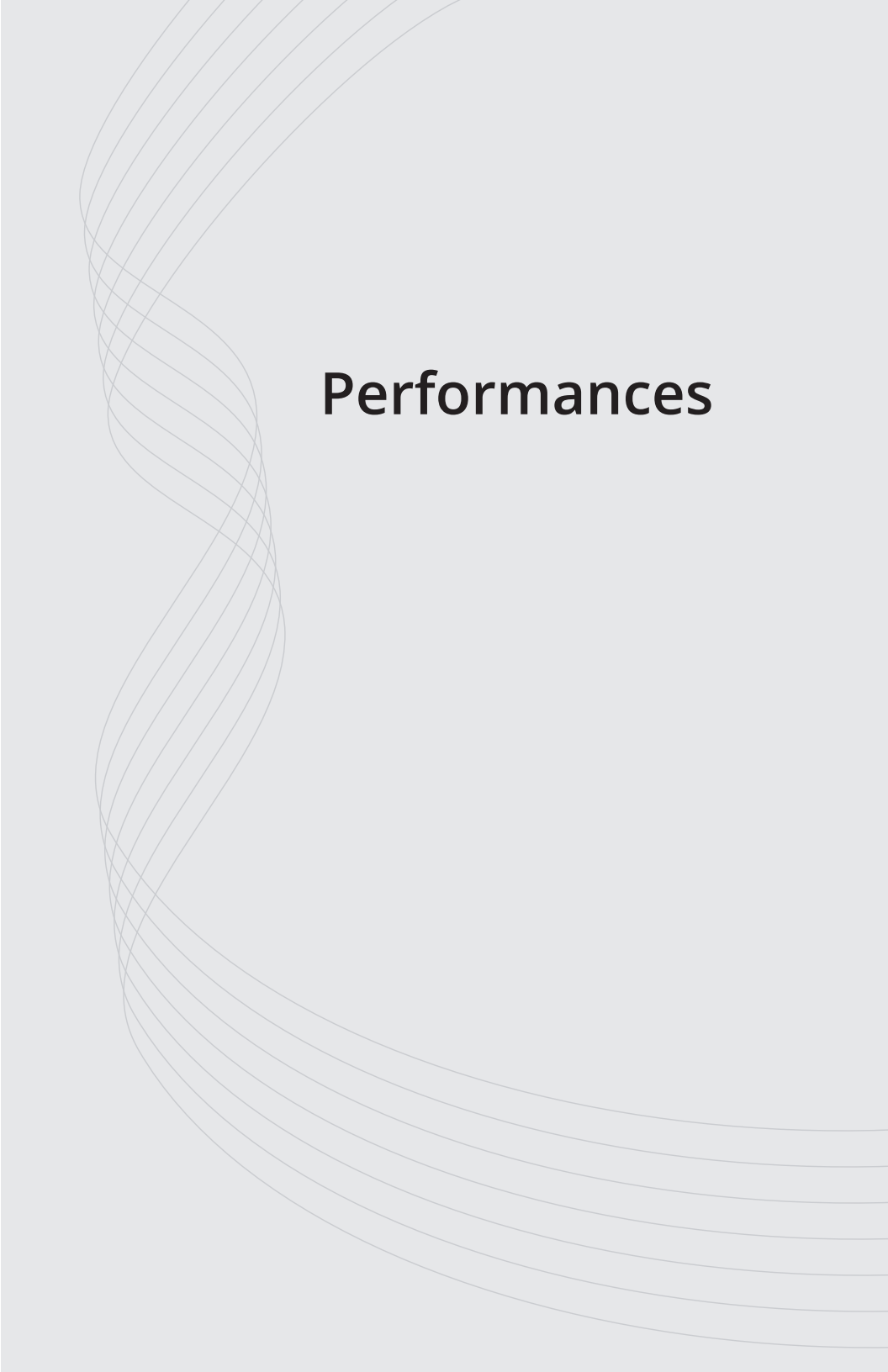
Nova Scotia Strong Award

DeeDee Austin & Band

Closing Remarks

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Performances

Emcee **Juanita Peters**



Juanita Peters is known by many people, as many things. She is an actor, film and stage director, and playwright.

As a film writer and director she has given us: *I Made a Vow*, *Hannah's Story*, *Africville*; *Can't Stop Now*, and *8:37 Rebirth* which has won multiple awards in Canada, New York, London and Paris.

Juanita Peters directed two seasons of the Film Nova Scotia Award winning dramatic series “Studio Black” and the multi-award winning television series DIGGSTOWN.

As a playwright she has given us: *The San Family*, *The Mother Club*, *I M Possible* and *The Green Book*.

She is a founding member of Women In Film and Television Atlantic and founding member of Atlantic Canada's newest multicultural festival, Nova MultiFest.

She is a member of Playwrights Atlantic Resource Centre, Canadian Actors Equity, Actra and the Directors Guild of Canada; as well as Board member of The Robert Pope Foundation, Alderney Landing, Nova MultiFest and the Weymouth Falls Land Trust.

Juanita was named the 2023 Portia White Prize Winner by Creative Arts NS and the 2022 Woman of the Year by the union representing 28,000 professional actors across the country, ACTRA. She is also a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee medal and the King Charles III Coronation Medal.

In addition, Juanita is the Executive Director of the Africville Museum where she continues telling the stories of one of Canada's most significant historical black communities.

Reception Music **MacNeil, Naik Duo**



Two talented and dynamic musicians come together for an evocative performance of original works, mixing intricate compositions with captivating improvisations. Influences (to name a few) of Western classical, flamenco, Indian classical and Jazz make this duo a rare treat!

Daniel MacNeil

Named one of Canada's most versatile guitarists, Daniel is a multiple award-winning guitarist, composer and educator. He has performed across Canada and Spain as a soloist, in chamber music concerts, and he has been featured as both a guitarist and composer for full-length concerts with professional symphony orchestras across Canada. In addition to his background in Western classical music, composition and improvisation, Daniel is also known for his specialized training in many genres of "world music," including: Flamenco, Middle Eastern, Indian, Balkan, Latin, and African, and, he is equally adept in New Music, Jazz and fusion styles. As a working professional, he composes and performs regularly for soloists, duos, trios, quartets, chamber ensembles, orchestra, dance, and voice.

Taral Naik

Taral is an accomplished Tabla player who moved to Halifax from Mumbai, India in late 2016. Having grown up in a musical environment, his natural inclination towards Tabla became apparent early in his childhood. Taral received training in Tabla through the ancient system of pedagogy called the guru-shishya parampara (master-disciple tradition) and also has a Masters degree in Music (Tabla) from India.

Traditional Chinese Dragon Dance



The dragon dance is a vibrant centerpiece of Chinese celebration, symbolizing good fortune, prosperity, and the warding off of evil spirits. A team of ten dancers brings the dragon to life, moving in seamless coordination to make its long, sinuous body ripple and soar. The performance opens the event with a dramatic entrance through the audience, the dragon weaving among guests before winding its way to the stage for a spirited final performance — an auspicious and unforgettable start to the celebration.

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.

Damini Awoyiga



Damini Awoyiga is a poet and former Youth Poet Laureate for the Halifax Regional Municipality (2023–2024). She is also a freelance journalist with CBC Mainstreet and a member of the HRM Youth Advisory Committee. Damini has been recognized with multiple awards, including the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Community Hero Award. In August 2025, she delivered her first TEDx Talk at TEDx Argyle on the power of creativity, becoming the youngest TEDx Argyle speaker at age 18. She is currently pursuing a degree in journalism at the University of King's College. Damini is also part of the Fabienne Colas Foundation's Being Black in Canada 2025 cohort in partnership with Netflix, a program dedicated to amplifying the voices of emerging Black filmmakers. Beyond her academic and professional pursuits, Damini is passionate about dance, writing, singing, and performing poetry that speaks to social justice issues close to her heart.

Change of Step



Formed by a dynamic group of world-class dancers, including a 9-time World Champion, Change of Step came together with a shared vision to breathe new life into traditional highland dancing. They perform

original choreography rooted in Scottish tradition, yet shaped by modern influences. Through interpretation of the music that inspires them to dance, their exciting performances showcase the musicality, grace, and athleticism of highland dancing.

Hope Swinimer



Born and raised in Argyle, Nova Scotia, Hope Swinimer has always felt a deep connection to the natural world and the ocean.

Hope is a certified veterinary practice manager (CVPM), and in 1995, while managing a veterinary hospital in Dartmouth, she rehabilitated her first wild animal, a robin injured by a cat, sparking a lifelong commitment to wildlife care. After becoming certified in wildlife rehabilitation, she began caring for animals from her own backyard before working with the province to establish a licensing process for wildlife rehabilitation in Nova Scotia.

She went on to found the charitable organization Hope for Wildlife on the Eastern Shore, which has grown from helping 40 animals in its first year to caring for over 7,000 wild animals annually, while also supporting tens of thousands of calls and welcoming visitors and students for education and outreach.

From the very beginning, the foundation of Hope for Wildlife's success has been its dedicated team of volunteers. Currently, well over 200 passionate people volunteer for Hope for Wildlife, and over the years many thousands of others have generously volunteered their time to help Nova Scotia's orphaned and injured wildlife.

DeeDee Austin



DeeDee Austin is a 20-year-old Indigenous pop powerhouse from Nova Scotia and Abegweit First Nation on PEI. DeeDee's high energy performances combine pop with Indigenous influences – bringing deeply personal experience into her lyrics and music. Her infectious energy grabs her audiences and holds them tight for every minute she is on stage.

DeeDee was awarded the Golden Buzzer by judges Howie Mandel and Shania Twain at Canada's Got Talent '25, which includes a \$25k prize.

With a combined total of 25 awards and nominations, she was recently nominated for 3 ECMA awards.

She has opened for Aysenabee's Maritime tour '25, Blue Rodeo and April Wine and has headlined numerous outdoor concerts for thousands of spectators.

DeeDee's school shows have drawn praise from educators for her ability to inspire and engage students.

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.

2026 Award Recipients

2026 Award Recipients

Cape Breton Region

Cape Breton Region Municipality

Aimee Romard

Aimee Romard is an outstanding volunteer whose exceptional dedication, commitment and leadership are instrumental to the ongoing success of the Coal Bowl Classic, Canada's most prestigious high school basketball tournament. As Co-Chair of the Coal Bowl Executive and Board of Directors, Aimee devotes her personal time to every aspect of tournament operations - from strategic planning and logistics to volunteer coordination and community engagement.

Her meticulous attention to detail, collaborative spirit and unwavering commitment to student athletes make her indispensable. For Aimee, the conclusion of one tournament immediately marks the beginning of preparations for the next one. She brings a positive attitude, enthusiasm and motivation to every meeting, inspiring the Board of Directors and ensuring an exceptional experience for the over 250 players, coaches, referees and families travelling to New Waterford.

Beyond her operational contributions, Aimee plays a key role in fostering broad community involvement. By actively recruiting new volunteers of all ages, she strengthens the local culture of volunteerism. Her ability to motivate others, delegate effectively, and cultivate teamwork continues to elevate both the tournament and its board.

Through Aimee's tireless efforts over the past decade, the Coal Bowl Classic continues to grow in scale, reputation, and community impact. She has made a lasting, meaningful contribution to recreation and volunteerism in New Waterford and beyond.

Municipality of the County of Richmond

Joan Bona

Joan wears many hats - often all at once - with humility, never seeking recognition. As President and Secretary of the Catholic Women's League, Chair of the Fleur de Lis Seniors Historical Committee, and a lead organizer of the 175th Anniversary of Louisdale celebrations, Director for the Parish choir, and Life Member Liaison for the Nova Scotia Provincial Catholic Women's League.

Joan is an active member of the community. From organizing and preserving archival materials for the Historical Committee to chairing the 175th Louisdale Anniversary Committee and everything in between, Joan's passion for contributing to her community is exceptional. She completes each task with local pride. Please join us in recognizing Joan for her hard work, dedication and commitment to her community. We thank you for all you do for Richmond County!

Municipality of the County of Inverness

Catherine MacKinnon

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Whycomagh is proud to nominate Catherine Ellen (MacRae) MacKinnon of Blue's Mills, for volunteer recognition. Cathy is a longtime member of the St. Andrew's congregation. For the past five years, she has served as Treasurer of the church, a position involving much skill, time and talent.

A dedicated wife, mother of two sons, proud grandmother of four grandchildren, daughter, sister and friend to many, Cathy has been a valued employee of A.A. Munro Insurance Agency for many years. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with family, reading and putting her very talented quilting skills to good use. We sincerely thank Cathy for her generous volunteer efforts and wish her all the very best!

Municipality of the County of Victoria

Maya MacLeod

Victoria County is pleased to announce Maya MacLeod as Volunteer of the Year for her outstanding commitment to youth, culture and community.

Maya is a Grade 8 student at Baddeck Academy and a dance instructor at Sarah's School of Music, where she mentors and encourages younger dancers while helping preserve and promote Cape Breton's rich cultural traditions. Her volunteer participation with The Young Heroes (Na Gaisgich Òga) and the Cape Breton Fiddlers Association bring music and dance to community events across the province. Maya also volunteers through her school band and choir programs, supports younger athletes through sports, and is actively involved in Victoria County's 4-H Club, promoting leadership, community involvement and active living among local youth. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition, Maya!

Town of Port Hawkesbury

Karen MacKinnon

Karen MacKinnon has dedicated countless hours of volunteer service to improving the quality of life in Port Hawkesbury and surrounding communities. For more than a decade, she has served on the Board of the Leaside Society, contributing her time, leadership and commitment to supporting local residents.

Karen played a leading role in the development of the playground at Tamarac Education Centre, where she devoted significant effort to advocacy, fundraising and project coordination to create a valuable community asset for local families. She currently serves as President of PHAST (Port Hawkesbury Antigonish Swim Team), where she works tirelessly to provide children and youth with a safe, supportive environment to learn and enjoy swimming.

A cancer survivor herself, Karen has continued to give back by volunteering with the Canadian Cancer Society. She previously chaired the local Relay for Life and remains an active volunteer

with the annual Terry Fox Run in Port Hawkesbury. In addition, she has contributed to community recreation through her previous service on the Board of the Strait Area Curling Club.

Karen approaches every volunteer role with enthusiasm, compassion, and a genuine desire to make her community stronger. Her leadership, dedication and willingness to help others have had a lasting impact on countless individuals and organizations. She exemplifies the spirit of volunteerism and is highly deserving of recognition.

Wagmatcook First Nation | Wagmatkukewey L'nue'kati **Wagmatcook Helpers**

Weja'tikemk Tapui pituimtlNaqn jel tapuiska'q jel si'st, kinu e'pitewey mawpultijik ta'n Waqmitkuk na toqita'sni'k ukjit apoqnmuanew wikmawaq miawiaq mawi ntu'na'q ta'n kinu utaneminaq, ta'n e'nut na kesalut. Mikuaptmk ta'n nuta'q apaji mimajua'tasiktn ta'n telo'ltimk tel-lukwemk e'pit ne'wt kelnikip ta'n anko'taquetijik wikmawaq miawiaql wejkwapituwemkewe'l, ninen kisituwekip nuji-apoqnmuemkewey mawpultimk melkuktik waqma'tikemk, wissukwatikemk, esmuetmk mijipjewey aqq maliaptmk apoqnmasuti. Ta'n Peskewiku's aqq Kisikewiku's Tapuiska'q pituimtlNaqn Tapuiska'q jel si'st, ninen poqji wlteskatultiekip ukjit maliaptminen ta'n melkuktmekl, kisite'tmnen ta'n wen i'tew miawiaql wejkwapituwemkewe'l, aqq eltun ta'n kisi tl-toqi-lukwutitesnu mnaqaj. Tujiw kisituwe'k, ninen mawpultiek na maliaptikipnn aqq esmuepnn Tapuiska'q jel ta'pu wejkwapituwemkewe'l ta'n na utank. Ula wiaqteksip ewikasikl, poqitelikemk mijipjewey, iknmuetmk nuta'q, maliamujik nuji-apoqnmua'tijik, aqq kiskaja'tu'n aqq esmuwetu'n mijipjewey. Ninen ma'wt ankaptimek na kjijitun wikmawaq telo'tmi'tij apoqnmujik aqq ankweyujik ukjit miawiaq ta'n nekemowk metuwe'k elta'tij. Tlia na lukwaqn kisi lukwaqniktitew aqq nuta'q te'sajiaq, toqo'mamk aqq ksalsuti, ninen na mekite'timketjik ninen e'pijik toqi klnmi'tis ula maliaptmi'tij. Ula ta'n melkuktmk, ninen na

apaji-mimajua'tuek na tel-lukwemk amal-lukwemk ta'n apajapa'sik
ta'n telikna'tijik aqq anko'taquetijik e'pijik na kaqisk iknmuetu'tis
koqoey utaneminaq. Ninen siawi kepmite'tmekl ninen tel-lukwutie
na apoqnmatultiek aqq kjijitunen mu wen wikmaq pesu'kwatmuk
entoq newtukwa'lukwet.

Since 2023, our women's group in Wagmatcook has come together to support families during one of the most difficult times in our community, the loss of a loved one. Recognizing the need to revive the traditional role women once held in caring families during wakes, we formed a volunteer group dedicated to cleaning, cooking, serving meals and coordinating support. In July and August 2023, we began meeting to organize our efforts, decide who would be available during wakes, and plan how we could work together effectively.

Since forming, our group has organized and catered 22 wakes in the community. This included planning menus, shopping for food, distributing supplies, coordinating volunteers, and preparing and serving meals. We also focus on ensuring families feel supported and cared for while grieving. Although the work can be demanding and requires time, teamwork and compassion, we are proud of how our women have united to carry this responsibility.

Through this effort, we have revived a traditional practice that reflects the strength and care women have always provided in our communities. We continue to honour our traditions by supporting one another and ensuring no families face loss alone.

2026 Award Recipients

Central Region

Halifax Regional Municipality

Brooke Barsness

Brooke is a compassionate, high-impact volunteer who turns lived experience into action. She was an early member of the Being There executive team, an organization dedicated to helping seniors age at home with dignity and connection, which later secured a \$10,000 Innovation Cup grant.

While balancing university, she has also contributed over 300 hours at Ronald McDonald House and supports the Alzheimer Society's Artful Afternoon program. Brooke also coached swimming with Autism Nova Scotia, helping children build confidence and life-saving skills.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Rhonda Frank

Rhonda is an extraordinary volunteer whose leadership strengthens well-being, connection and resilience across the province. Through her business, Artsy Fartsy, she provides free creative wellness workshops, mentors youth, donates artwork, and volunteers design and marketing support to nonprofits. She creates safe, low-barrier opportunities for connection and empowerment. After over six years of service with the Community Health Boards, including serving as Provincial Chair, Rhonda continues to amplify local voices through community mediation with the municipality and United Way, her work with the Nova Scotia Alcohol Policy Coalition, and Dalhousie University led efforts by making connections within Nova Scotia Health.

Closer to home, Rhonda helped establish the Eastern Shore Community Fridge, volunteers with the Musqui Café food initiative and Neri Arts Center, and created EasternShoreNS.ca, a comprehensive community website connecting residents with local resources, organizations, events and opportunities.

She is also a member of the Nova Scotia Guard and previously volunteered with Eastern Shore Ground Search and Rescue until a knee injury required her to step back. Across every role, Rhonda brings creativity, compassion and a deep commitment to building stronger, safer and more connected communities.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Sara Bregraw

Sara is an exceptional youth volunteer who turns compassion into action through consistent service and youth leadership. She supports the Nova Scotia Islamic Community Centre by helping prepare over 100 care packages for people experiencing homelessness and coordinating volunteers for major community events such as the Female Summer Festival.

Sara also mentors and empowers youth through Promoting Leadership and Health for African Nova Scotian's (PLANS) at Dalhousie and Shad Canada. She uses her voice to advance STEM access through initiatives like UNICEF Canada and Brilliant Labs. Across roles, she helps build a more connected, inclusive community.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Sachin Gupta

Sachin is an extraordinary community builder whose volunteer leadership strengthens health, education and food security across the Halifax region.

For the past three years, he has helped CNIB members stay connected by calling about 15 people each week with event reminders — reducing isolation and ensuring no one is left out. He founded Healing Hands, leading a province-wide volunteer

team that has created and donated over 125 mastectomy pillow and pouch kits to the IWK Women's Clinic, bringing comfort and dignity during recovery.

Sachin also expands youth opportunities by cofounding Homework Heroes and Piano Time with Halifax Public Libraries and Rising Youth Canada, providing eight keyboards and free lessons for children who might not otherwise have access to music education. He also continues to give back hands-on at Dartmouth General Hospital and the Dartmouth Community Fridge by showing what it means to lead through service and build lasting pathways for connection, comfort and opportunity.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Dr. Anuroop Kaur

Since arriving in Canada in April 2022, Dr. Anuroop has contributed over 1,000 volunteer hours each year across the Halifax region, building inclusive programs that connect people across cultures, generations and abilities.

She leads with Nova Noble Cause Society which provides stress-free activities, serves as the volunteer Principal at Sikh Sapling Academy and serves as Chair of the Nominating Committee for the Board of Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia. She has expanded access to cultural belonging, wellness supports and learning opportunities that strengthen community connection and reduce isolation. Over the past three years, she has achieved all of this while maintaining a full-time teaching career.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Vanshika Khatwani

Vanshika is a dedicated youth leader expanding access to STEM across Nova Scotia through Girls STEM Up (GSU). She has led the CPA High School of GSU to 55 weekly members and serves as the province's Junior Executive Liaison to a national network of 320 students, strengthening connections and opportunities for youth in STEM.

Vanshika pairs leadership with hands-on community service, including partnering with the IWK on youth-led initiatives and organizing direct support for people in need through food donations and safety kits. Her service blends practical help with long-term impact.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Abigail MacDonald

Abigail is a passionate youth volunteer who goes above and beyond across multiple organizations including the IWK Health Centre, École Bois-Joli, YMCA Immigrant Services and youth basketball through Summer Hoops. She helps children and families feel supported by guiding people through the hospital, building confidence in young readers through thoughtful one-on-one help and fostering belonging for newly arrived children through mentorship and shared experiences. Through her youth leadership and her role with the Conseil Jeunesse Provincial de la Nouvelle-Écosse, Abigail strengthens inclusion, confidence and connection wherever she serves.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Leanne Penney

Leanne is the kind of volunteer every community hopes for -steady, generous, and always ready to help.

Week after week, she supports the Fall River Lions Club in the Hall kitchen, where her leadership has helped expand wing nights and make free seniors' dinners possible. She stepped forward to lead Hope Cottage's key fundraiser, helping raise close to \$30,000 to support thousands of meals each month and raised \$300,000 annually. When wildfire response demanded quick action, Leanne helped mobilize community support to deliver essential supplies and assist with feeding more than 250 firefighters. Her presence strengthens programs, builds connections and makes volunteering feel easy to join.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Gloria Stephens

Gloria is a trailblazing nurse and tireless historian who, after a distinguished career and leadership in operating room nursing, returned to Halifax and devoted herself to ensuring the legacy of the VGH School of Nursing is never forgotten. Her decades of volunteer work involved building and preserving the VGH Nursing Archives, managing key historical resources, collecting artifacts and stories and authoring books and major projects.

In 2004, she was a founder and President of the 'Save the Archives' committee and the 'Association Health Sciences Archives and Museums NS' committee. Gloria was also founder and president of the Nursing History NS Society and President of the VGH School of Nursing Alumni 2012-2014. She was fortunate to have two pioneer nursing experiences: member of the first Neurosurgical Operating Room Team at the VGH and at St Paul's Hospital in Vancouver. She was a member of the Research Team for 'Open Heart' surgery and the scrub nurse for the first 'Open Heart Operation'.

Gloria was a founding member and President of the BC Operating Room Nurses Group in 1968 and received the RNABC Innovative Nurse Award for the publication of the first 'Standards of Patient Care for Operating Room Nurses' in 1972. She was also a founding member and President of the Operating Room Nurses Association of Canada in 1983 and published the first National 'Standards of Patient Care for Operating Room Nurses' in 1986. She received several awards such as the ORNAC Isabel Adams Award; Drake Thompson Writing Award; RNABC Excellence in Nursing Practice; RNABC Excellence in Education and Woman of Distinction Award 1994.

Halifax Regional Municipality

Jocelyn Tingley

Jocelyn is a long-time volunteer leader at Bedford United Church who brings people together through practical care and welcoming community spaces. In May 2024, she founded the free monthly Community Meal with no budget by mobilizing over 100 volunteers and building strong partnerships, which has helped serve 1,315 meals to date. The program now provides more than 125 meals each month, with additional meals for people who are shut-in or experiencing short-term need. For more than a decade, Jocelyn has also created and led programs for autistic youth and adults, strengthening a sense of belonging and connection.

2026 Award Recipients

Fundy Region

Municipality of Colchester County

Nancy Crosby

Nancy has been a deeply valued part of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colchester East Hants for nearly 30 years, and her impact is felt in every corner of the organization. As a Big Sister mentor to two littles who are now 37 and 26, she has brought warmth, consistency and joy into their lives, creating connections that truly matter.

Over the years, Nancy has generously shared her time and heart in countless ways, including serving in every role on the Board of Directors. Today, she leads the fundraising committee with creativity, and enthusiasm, bringing people together through meaningful events.

Through her business, Classic Rentals, Nancy is always the first to step forward in support of the campaigns, including the recent "Opening Doors" initiative. Nancy's kindness, dedication and unwavering belief in the mission inspire all. Big Brothers Big Sisters is incredibly grateful for her and the difference she continues to make.

Town of Stewiacke

Bill Hellewell

For the past three years, Bill Hellewell has been an integral part of The Town of Stewiacke Recreation's success and its most significant program initiatives! There was a large gap in programming for seniors, and after connecting with Bill, the vision of a monthly senior social with music and snacks came to life.

Bill not only expressed enthusiasm for helping but also took on the leadership role for the entire initiative. He has been responsible for everything from booking musicians and managing audio engineering to distributing posters to local shops, businesses and community groups.

Over the past three years, the monthly senior socials have become a beloved community staple, regularly attracting over 50 senior residents and drawing some of the most talented local musicians who eagerly return year after year, making it a favoured venue for their performances.

These three years have also witnessed the flourishing of Stewiacke's theatre scene, featuring four adult theatre productions and four children's theatre productions. In all eight of these efforts, Bill has generously donated his time, equipment and audio engineering expertise. Each year, he has adjusted and made improvements, continuously striving to help the shy children project their voices loud enough for parents and audience members to hear.

During this year's adult theatre production, Bill co-wrote and composed all the songs with Playwright Barb Moxum. Bill also recorded the entire score, which included numerous re-recordings for cast members who struggled to find the correct vocal key. Bill truly cares for the Town of Stewiacke. The time and sacrifices he has made for the programs and community initiatives have been nothing short of exemplary.

Town of Truro

Dwayne Vidito

When it comes to dedication, heart and community spirit, Dwayne is truly one of a kind. A proud volunteer with the Colchester Food Network since 2004, he has spent more than 20 years giving back and helping make the community a better place.

From the organization's early days, Dwayne has been a constant and valued presence, growing alongside the network and supporting its mission every step of the way. What makes Dwayne especially remarkable is not only the time and energy he gives,

but the joy and positivity he brings wherever he goes. Whether helping at events, supporting programs, or simply showing up with his warm smile and enthusiastic spirit, he has a way of making everyone feel welcome and appreciated. Dwayne's unwavering commitment, kindness, and passion for service inspire everyone around him. He is a true example of what it means to serve a community with compassion, loyalty and heart. The Colchester Food Network is deeply grateful for his many years of dedication and the lasting impact he continues to make. The Colchester Food Network would not be the same without him.

Town of Oxford

Chrystal McNutt

Much like the rest of the world, COVID hit the Town of Oxford hard. The Municipal Physical Ability Lead had to be let go, and recreation centres, such as the arena, had to be closed. The Mayor knew that recreation was a key component to community well-being and tasked Chrystal McNutt with creating and leading a group committed to creating recreational opportunities for the residents of Oxford. Chrystal didn't hesitate and jumped in.

For years, she led her team in creating everything from craft nights and cooking classes for kids to Easter events and March Break Madness, but perhaps her most beloved project was leading the annual Santa Claus Parade. When Oxford was ready to welcome a new MPAL, Chrystal was the program's biggest cheerleader, and her passion for the role and its meaning to her community led the current Municipal Physical Ability Lead to apply for the job. In recent months, Chrystal has shifted her volunteer efforts to other projects, but nothing will make her give up her most beloved task - guiding Santa's sleigh down Main Street, while Mr. and Mrs. Claus greet their many fans. Oxford is so fortunate to have her.

Municipality of the County of Cumberland

Sharon Rogers

Sharon has served as President of the Oxford Seniors Club for the past three years and has been instrumental in revitalizing the organization. Under her leadership, membership increased dramatically from a low of 27 during Covid 203 members currently. She is a strong team leader whose leadership style encourages participation, supports new ideas and initiatives, and values collaboration and volunteerism.

Through Sharon's guidance, programming has expanded to offer activities every day of the week and some evenings, including chair yoga, line dancing, card games, quilting, crochet, knitting, ukulele practice, special events and information sessions. People with different talents have heard about the clubs' activities and are now approaching them to offer their skills, which now include rug hooking, Dance for Health, stretching exercises and pottery classes with a renowned potter.

She is always focused on seniors' needs and interests and consistently finds ways to address them. The impact of her leadership is reflected in what members say about the club. One member shared, "I was isolated but heard about the group from Sharon and now I feel I have support and interesting things to do with such a friendly and interesting group." Another noted, "Ordinarily I wouldn't volunteer for anything, but I do now and feel truly appreciated for the part I play." Sharon is a model of effective leadership and an example of how seniors should be valued and supported.

Town of Amherst

Paul Cormier

Paul stands out for his long-standing dedication, strong leadership, and hands-on approach to serving numerous community organizations. He has been a driving force behind the social and financial success of the Amherst Curling Club. As Rental and Bar Chair he works to ensure the facility operates smoothly in every aspect-from managing supplies to coordinating volunteers and leading annual fundraising efforts. His creativity and attention to detail shine through in every event he touches, reflecting his exceptional commitment and reliability.

Paul's impact extends across many organizations. He has served as President, Treasurer and Equipment Manager of the Amherst Minor Basketball Association, chaired AMBA and Viking/Kranack scholarship committees and coached in the Steve Nash Youth Basketball Program. Within the Town of Amherst's Multi-Sport Program, Paul has generously volunteered his time instructing both basketball and curling, helping to inspire and mentor participants of all ages. He also contributed twenty years to the Town of Amherst Sports Awards Dinner. His dedication to community sport spans decades.

Since 1985, Paul has organized weekly gentlemen's hockey, coached minor soccer, umpired Little League, and volunteered with Special Olympics-demonstrating a lifelong commitment to inclusion, recreation and community spirit.

Paul's contributions have not gone unnoticed. He was awarded the YMCA Peace Medal in 2019 and named Amherst Curling Club Volunteer of the Year in 2017. He also coordinated fundraising efforts for building the new hospital for which he was a recipient of a Canada Post Silver Postmark Award. Paul's unwavering dedication, generosity, and leadership make him truly deserving of recognition as the Town of Amherst's Volunteer of the Year 2026.

Municipality of East Hants

Ken Moxsom

Ken joined the Fire Service as a volunteer in 1990. In 1994 he joined the Canadian Armed Forces and moved to Ontario. Upon his return to East Hants in 2013, while still in the military, Ken re-joined the Milford Volunteer Fire Department. Since his return to the Fire Service, Ken has been appointed as a Member to the Order of Military Merit and presented the Queen's Jubilee Medal.

Currently as the Deputy Chief of Milford Volunteer Fire Department, he continues to be the Training Officer and MFR Coordinator as well as maintaining an active role in the East Hants Fire Service Training Committee. His role in the Training Committee involves the coordination and planning of Mutual Aid activities and training for the East Hants Fire Service. Ken has planned and coordinated CN Rail Dangerous Goods training, Emergency First Responder Elevator training and countless other community representatives and organizations on behalf of the East Hants Fire Service.

This year, Ken was awarded as East Hants' Model Volunteer of the Year for dedicating his time to ensure over 300 members of the East Hants Fire Service have access to quality mutual aid training. These opportunities range across many crucial topics and contribute to keeping communities safer and ultimately saving lives.

Overall, Ken has put hundreds, if not thousands of hours into creating a stronger and collaborative fire service for his Municipality and beyond. Thank you, Ken, for providing opportunity and training to our East Hants Fire Service volunteers.

2026 Award Recipients

Highland Region

Town of Stellarton

Clifton Mason & Lola

Clifton Mason and his beloved dog, Lola, are “unofficial” volunteers in our town. From early spring through to the first snowfall – and sometimes in the winter - Clif and Lola can be seen strolling the streets of Stellarton, with litter grabber and garbage bag in hand, collecting trash and other debris.

Always friendly, Clifton and Lola quietly go about their work which embodies the spirit of Stellarton Communities in Bloom: citizen led, exhibiting civic pride, positive sense of community, and tangible improvements generated by their efforts. They were never asked to do the work they do and they most likely aren't even aware of the impact their endeavors have in keeping our town beautiful. However, they're a duo whose kindness and thoughtfulness has caught the attention of many residents. We, and the community as a whole, are incredibly grateful to Clif and Lola for their tireless work!

Municipality of Pictou County

Ruth Thompson

Ruth Thompson has dedicated more than five decades of volunteer service in Pictou County. She moved from Edmonton to Pictou County in the late sixties and acknowledged she was a “Come From Away” and admits it was a bit of an adjustment going from a busy city to rural Pictou County.

Almost immediately, she began helping in the community and a found volunteering gave her an outlet to meet people, form life-long friendships, gave her a satisfying sense of accomplishment

and grounded her in her community. She began her involvement with the Plymouth Community Centre in 1970 and served extensively from 1977 through the mid-1980s, and again from 2009 until this year. During much of that time, she held the role of Secretary- Treasurer, managing essential administrative work such as bookkeeping, correspondence, scheduling, and oversight of facility operations. Her strong organizational skills and steady leadership helped ensure the Community Centre remained open and active through many years of change.

Community members widely credit Ruth's commitment as a key reason the centre has continued to serve local residents for so long. Even into her 80s, she remained actively involved, demonstrating remarkable dedication and reliability. She recently stepped down after decades of service.

Her legacy continues as the centre is now a fully accessible, net zero community building. It is presently undergoing renovations to become a daycare facility opening in 2026, reflecting the lasting impact of her work. It is with great pride that we have selected Ruth Thompson as our 2026 representative Volunteer of the Year for the Municipality of Pictou County.

Town of Antigonish **Elliott Anderson**

Elliott Anderson has been a cornerstone of volunteerism in Antigonish for over four decades, dedicating his time, leadership and energy to sport, community and faith-based initiatives.

Starting in 1980, Elliot played a vital role in local softball—as a player, coach, executive, and umpire—contributing at every level, including provincial competitions and Midget Nationals. His leadership extended to overseeing both the town and county associations, helping shape the sport for generations of athletes.

Beyond the field, Elliott has made a lasting impact through his commitment to St. Ninian Parish, where he has helped teach religion classes and served on both the parish council and cemetery committee. As a member of the Knights of Columbus

for over 20 years, including three as Grand Knight, he has been a dedicated lecturer, organizer, and volunteer, recently supporting Special Olympics events.

Elliott also devoted more than a decade to minor hockey as a coach, manager, and executive member, while contributing to Cub Scouts and major fundraising efforts, including the Charles V. Keating Millennium Centre. Through his dedication, Elliott Anderson exemplifies community spirit, leadership, and generosity.

Municipality of the District of Guysborough

Marilyn Pellerin

In 2005, Marilyn Pellerin relocated with her husband, Sylvester, to Larry's River. Now semi-retired, she felt she had time to give back to an area that had been so welcoming. She was invited to attend a Guysborough Memorial Hospital Auxiliary meeting and was so impressed with their accomplishments that she joined right away. Over the next few years, she served as Vice-President and then President for two years.

Marilyn also served on the Nova Scotia Hospital Auxiliary as the Newsletter representative and, more recently, as the Education Chair. During this time, she was asked to head a small grant to encourage social engagement in rural communities, especially following the isolation many experienced during and shortly after COVID.

When the grant period ended, it felt like something special had been created. With the help of a group of core volunteers, Marilyn helped create what has become Club 7, named for the initial seven communities involved: Whitehead, Port Felix, Charlos Cove, Larry's River, Lundy, Tor Bay and New Harbour.

Club 7 has brought social engagement, physical activity, educational opportunities, craft and artistic endeavours, and created bonds and friendships within the area. It started out small but has continued to grow, opening up local programs and providing events that have been offered cost-free thanks to the Recreation Department, municipal councillors and grants.

Marilyn and the Club 7 volunteers believe that everyone deserves the chance to participate and enjoy themselves, and removing obstacles such as fees has been a main priority.

Marilyn is proud to accept this honour on behalf of everyone who not only helped but also believed that Club 7 was a valuable asset and that rural communities deserved to be recognized in their own right.

Municipality of the County of Antigonish

Andy Pumphrey

Andy has contributed countless hours to the arts community of Antigonish. She has contributed beautiful set pieces to plays with Theatre Antigonish and Music of the Night. She is currently putting many hours into creating an elaborate puppet for a play celebrating the Sisters of St. Martha's. Most notably over the past year, she has done invaluable work in her role on the Board of Directors of Antigonish Culture Alive, Antigonish Film Connection, and as a member of the Antigonish Arts Centre Project group. With Antigonish Culture Alive and Antigonish Film Connection, she has taken on the digital work of creating the website and Google Workspace, as well as written grant proposals and helped organize special events in the Town and County. With the Antigonish Arts Centre Project, she has attended countless meetings, taken a thorough inventory of the plethora of arts organizations in town, networked with local organizations, and advocated tirelessly for an arts centre to serve the artistic needs of the Antigonish region.

Town of Westville

Mary Taylor

Mary transformed a personal dream into a powerful community movement. Her plan to walk 100km in one day for Food-for-Focus grew into a full Westville wide event as she shared her vision with local partners, schools, the congregation, the mayor, the library, the legion, the military and residents. She walked the entire day—never alone—as people of all ages and backgrounds

joined her. The town rallied with meals, activities, a parade, and family events, creating a shared celebration of compassion and action. Her determination to ensure children have food inspired Westville to unite and ultimately double the fundraising goal. Her determination, humility, and unwavering focus on children's well being motivated organizations, leaders, families, and volunteers to join her.

Mary leads quietly and purposefully, bringing people together and creating momentum through her example. She transforms simple ideas into meaningful change, demonstrating exceptional leadership rooted in kindness and humility. Her ability to mobilize an entire town around a cause reflects her deep commitment to service and community. Some of the projects she supports include: Food for Focus, Pictou County Food Bank, Pictou County Fuel Fund, Viola's Place, Karma Closet, Emma's Pyjamas, Tearmann House Mary stands out because she turns compassion into action and inspires others to follow. We are incredibly proud and honoured to have Mary Taylor be Westville's Volunteer of the Year.

Town of Pictou

Dawn Westhaver

Dawn is the "go-to" gardening expert in Pictou. She is past President and a Lifetime Member of the Pictou and Area Garden Club, holding many leadership roles, provincially and nationally. Her years of expertise and willingness to help others inspired her to create and share weekly gardening videos during the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in the highest ever sales for the annual plant sale.

Dawn was awarded Nova Scotia Garden Association of Garden Clubs "Garden Hero" in 2022. She has been the organizer of countless annual plant sales, designed and project-managed plantings at the Pictou Veterans Wing, Scammell Gardens and is a 12-year mentor and organizer for the Pictou Community Garden. Dawn has over 40 years of volunteering experience both locally and in Alberta. Her experience includes Secretary and Leader positions in Scouting and Pathfinders, president of Central Highlands Association of the Disabled and provides support to Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities, and various

recreation and sport organizations, notably the Nova Scotia 55+ games. The Town of Pictou is very proud to have Dawn as our 2026 Volunteer of the Year.

Town of New Glasgow

David Arthur MacLean

Art MacLean, as he's known to his friends, is a dedicated community volunteer whose commitment to service has had a lasting impact on New Glasgow and beyond. Over the years, he has devoted countless hours to supporting community events, emergency response efforts, youth initiatives, and public safety programs.

Art served as a member of the New Glasgow Fire Department for 25 years and chaired the New Glasgow Fire Department Santa Claus Parade for 10 years. He has also volunteered extensively with first aid services at numerous Town of New Glasgow events, the Joe Earle Memorial Road Race, and the Atlantic International Airshow alongside the New Glasgow Police Youth Troopers program.

Art's dedication to helping others has earned him two life-saving awards, including for assisting an infant aboard the PEI ferry in 2012 and helping save the life of a participant during the 2024 Joe Earle Memorial Road Race. This year, he won the 2026 Joe Earle Memorial Road Race Volunteer Award.

He has spoken at New Glasgow Academy graduations, volunteered on health and safety committees, and provided support for veterans as Past Zone 6 Royal Canadian Legion Colour Party Honour Guard Commander.

He is currently an Advanced First Aid Instructor with St. John Ambulance and volunteers as Commander, of the Pictou County Fire Association Honour Guard. Through his generosity, leadership, and community spirit, Art continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

Municipality of the District of St. Mary's

Tammie Vautour

Tammie is a community leader, often championing new community events and initiatives throughout the municipality. From supporting local fundraisers and events for non-profit organizations to promoting community engagement and local businesses, she consistently volunteers her time and efforts to help make things successful and inclusive.

What makes Tammie really stand out is her genuine interest in making her community better - whether it's launching Sherbrooke Pride or volunteering on numerous boards. Her reliability and willingness to step in wherever needed is evident in the community projects she manages and supports like her annual Feast for Cause, an event that raises money for the local food bank.

Her dedication and strong work ethic have made her an important part of the community. Tammie's impact can also be seen through the recognition she has received, including Community Impact Awards and multiple small business awards. These acknowledgments reflect the positive difference she continues to make through her creative initiatives, volunteer work and community involvement.

Town of Trenton

Danielle MacCarron

Danielle MacCarron has been a dedicated volunteer in the Town of Trenton for many years, giving her time and energy to support local organizations and, most recently, the Trenton school community.

A teacher of 18 years, and currently the Learning Support Teacher at Trenton Elementary School, Danielle has made a meaningful impact through her involvement with Home and School, School Advisory Committees, the Breakfast Program, and the Backpack Program. Her commitment goes far beyond attending meetings - she plays an active role in planning events, managing budgets and ensuring programs run smoothly for students and families.

Each morning, Danielle helps lead the school breakfast program which includes planning menus, purchasing groceries and preparing and serving meals to students. For her, the most rewarding part is seeing children start their day with a full stomach and a smile, knowing they are supported and ready to learn. Her efforts not only support students but also provide relief to families, ensuring every child has access to nutritious food in an inclusive and welcoming environment.

Danielle's passion for volunteering began at a young age and has remained a constant throughout her life. She describes it as something that has never felt like work, but simply a way of giving back that comes naturally. Her contributions have helped create opportunities, strengthen food security and foster a sense of care and belonging within the school community.

Pictou Landing First Nation | Piktukewey L'nue'kati **Ann Francis-Muise**

Ula iknmuetasik na mekite'tasik iknmuj na Ann Francis-Muise ta'n mikuamut nekem ukjit tel-melkuktik, mu newtite'lsik tel-lukwet, aqq mu anqa'siktnuk melkuktasik ta'n na telo'ti'tij utaneminaq Miawiaq ta'n newtipunqwek, nekm pikweli iknmuetiq te'sajiaq, teliknat aqq ksalsutim ukjit apoqmatmn pikwelkl utane'l tel-lukwutimkl. Tlia na apoqnmuen wejiaq a'lsitu'kuo'meminen, apoqnmatek maliaptasiktn aqq tl-lukwutinen na Maliko'mijk mawio'mi'l, apoqmatk te'sipunqwekewey Elta'mk na Se't A'n te Beaupré, wiaqpimk n utank waqma'tikemk melkuktasik, kiswa ketmoqja'lejik kitapq aqq kikjuk wikultijik na siawi ajita'new wejiaq al-leketa'mk kiswa kwijmukewe'l tel-lukwutimkl, nekm kaqisk nikanusewit ta'n ekina'muek.

Nekm welmitiq aqq weljesit toqa'laji mimajuinu'k, ksalsuti iknmuaq utankewaq ta'n msit tewijo'tijik ukjit wiaqa'lsultinew, siawi nastaqpultinew, aqq mkite'tminew utanemuow. Weja'tikemk apoqmuemk maliaptmkl telitpiaql ta'n naqmasiaq ketmoqja'luj ktikik ukjit tuwita'new kwijmuk ukjit pquji-leketa'new kiswa lian wastewey ji'nm, nekm nestik na utan na melkiknewa'tasik wejiaq

naskwa'tatultimkl telitpia'timkl, wiaqa'ltultimk aqq ankweyatultimk ukjit e'tasiw wen.

Nekm nuji-apoqnmuemkewey wkjijaqmij apajapa'sik ta'n na ketloqoey teluek ta'n tel-lukwemk, iknmuemk, aqq utaney nikana'tikemkewey. Wejiaq nekm tel-wlmitoq, kisitoq siawa'sik aqq kelu'k we'tuwe'k ukjit pikwelkl mimajuaqnn.

Ukjit welte'tmek nekm melkuktik, majulkwatq aqq meko'tikl iknmuetuql, ninen na kepmite'taqnmultiek ukjit iknmuanen ta'n na Utaney Nuji-apoqnkuemkewey Iknmuetasik.

Wela'lioq ukjit msit ta'n tel-lukwutioq ukjit utaneminen.

This award is proudly presented to Ann Francis-Muise in recognition of her outstanding dedication, selfless service and unwavering commitment to the well-being of our community.

Ann generously gives her time, energy and compassion to support countless community initiatives. Whether volunteering through the church, helping organize and participate in Mali'komij celebrations, supporting the annual Pilgrimage to Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, taking part in community clean-up efforts, or encouraging friends and neighbours to stay active through walking and outdoor activities, she consistently leads by example.

Her kindness and enthusiasm bring people together, inspiring community members of all ages to become involved, stay connected, and take pride in their community. Ann understands that community is strengthened through shared experiences, inclusion, and caring for one another.

Her volunteer spirit reflects the true meaning of service, generosity, and community leadership. Through her countless acts of kindness, she has made a lasting and positive impact on many lives.

In appreciation of her dedication, commitment, and generous contributions, we are honored to present her with the Community Volunteer Award.

Wela'lioq for all that you do for our community.

2026 Award Recipients

South Shore Region

Town of Yarmouth

Brandon Trask

Brandon is an outlier among his generation. While we see many volunteers with grey hair now, everyone remarks that young people aren't doing their part. Brandon smashes that stereotype!

He is everywhere and not just volunteering but often leading, organizing and making things happen. Brandon was always involved in sports but as a young man he started organizing new leagues, tournaments and fundraisers. If someone needs help, Brandon is there. He's a busy young father but family life doesn't slow him down. In fact, he brings his kids whenever possible so they can see dad volunteering and learning alongside them. Even before he became a father, Brandon was coaching children's soccer and hockey teams. Brandon organizes the Oldtimers Hockey League and the Men's Basketball League while coaching the Boys High School Varsity Basketball team.

Brandon does summer tournaments and a yearly fundraiser for his buddy Josh, who had a brain injury, raising thousands each year for that wonderful cause. Brandon does everything with charm and a smile, and no one says no to him. He is so passionate about keeping kids moving!

Brandon helps the Rotary Club every year with their Ribfest. He also helped a crew of young people manage the bar at the biggest event Yarmouth has ever seen, the World Acadian Congress. Most recently, he has tackled a volunteer position as a sports reporter for the local radio station, reporting on local athletes and teams who are achieving great things.

We tend to celebrate people who do things for a long time but Brandon should be celebrated for being a leader of the younger

generation by leading the way for others to follow. His boundless energy (he also does late-night DJing after the kids are in bed) is a true example of being passionate about his community.

Town of Lunenburg

Craig Munroe

Craig volunteers countless hours at both the curling club and the golf course, two important recreational hubs in our community. His steady presence, willingness to step in wherever needed and genuine enthusiasm for supporting others make him an invaluable asset to these organizations. His efforts help create welcoming, vibrant spaces where people can gather, connect and thrive.

A defining quality of Craig's volunteer spirit is his unwavering inclusivity. He treats everyone with respect and warmth, welcoming individuals from all cultural backgrounds and walks of life. His openness, kindness and great sense of humour help ensure that community spaces feel accessible and inviting to everyone. Through his generosity, humility and deep compassion, Craig truly embodies the spirit of volunteerism in the town of Lunenburg.

It is this warmth, energy, and unwavering respect for others that make his contributions so meaningful and lasting. He reflects the very best of what it means to be a citizen, a neighbour and a leader within our town.

Municipality of the District of Barrington

Jeanelle Smith

Over the years Jeanelle has volunteered in many ways. She first served as supply officer for the Barrington Air Cadets and as a member of the Roseway Hospital Auxiliary. Then, she went on to serve as a member of the Barrington Area Lionettes (Charter Member).

She is in charge of Souper Saturday at the West Head Wesleyan Church, which serves meals to folks in the community. She has also served as treasurer of the West Head Wesleyan Church as well as a board member of the Church. Additionally, she has volunteered to help the Town of Clark's Harbour with their Breakfast with Santa event for kids and has also helped the town with their annual Christmas party.

Most recently, Jeanelle volunteered with the Town's Birthday Party, selling tickets for balloon creatures and face painting for kids. She also helps with activities for the New Horizons Senior Club.

As you can see, Jeanelle is one busy lady and is much appreciated in her community!

Region of Queens Municipality

Velta Vikmanis

Seeking more time in nature and a calmer pace of life, Velta Vikmanis moved from Toronto to Liverpool in November 2021 and quickly embraced her new community.

Creativity, arts and culture are an important part of Velta's life and influence her volunteerism. As a volunteer at Queens County Community Radio (QCCR), Velta produced radio shows and served on the Board of Directors as a Director, Secretary and Vice Chair. She was also a Board member of the Astor Theatre Society.

A passion for art paired with her previous career led Velta to offering art classes to residents of Queens Manor long term care home, with the philosophy that anyone of any age has the ability to create. She feels that creating art together provides an opportunity to learn about each other and build friendships. Velta later expanded her volunteer activities to include palliative support. She feels it is an honour to be asked to be present at someone's time of need and transition.

In five short years since moving to Queens County, Velta has made an impact on many residents and her enthusiasm, passion and skills have enriched many community organizations in the area. The Region of Queens Municipality is proud that Velta Vikmanis is one of Queens County's Volunteers of the Year.

Region of Queens Municipality

Trevor Munroe

Very few people find their calling and passion at a young age – but Trevor Munroe found his as a member of Liverpool Fire Fighters Association, when he joined as a Junior Firefighter at age 13.

Now, with more than 30 years of service, dedication, loyalty, empathy and compassion, he has remained a vital volunteer with the Liverpool Fire Department, moving from a Junior to the roles of Firefighter, Lieutenant, Captain, Deputy Chief, and finally Department Fire Chief. Trevor was recently re-elected as Chief, a testament to his leadership in the department.

Trevor's training and certifications have strengthened his skills in areas such as Structure Fires, Vehicle Extrication, Engine Driver, Engineer and more. He manages a team of over 25 volunteers, including Captains, Lieutenants, Firefighters, and Medical First Responders, along with purchasing and maintaining equipment, training crew, and staying up-to-date with Provincial/Federal Regulations. He is one of five Fire Chiefs who serve with two Municipal councillors on the Region of Queens Municipality's Fire Services Committee, where he expresses the needs and concerns of the local volunteer fire departments.

When asked why he volunteers, Trevor said, "I love to help and support people. Everyone needs someone on their worst day." Region of Queens Municipality is proud that Trevor Munroe has been there on the bad days and good for more than 30 years.

Town of Bridgewater

Michelle Dionne-Varner

Michelle Dionne-Varner has a long and generous history of volunteering in Bridgewater and the surrounding area. She has spent years helping people, supporting local organizations and giving back to her community in many different ways.

Michelle serves on the Board of Directors for The Rose Fund, which helps cancer patients in Lunenburg and Queens Counties manage household and medical costs during treatment. She

volunteers at many fundraising events including the Brothers of the Highway Truck Show, the Black Educators Association Golf Tournament, Coldest Night of the Year and the Walk for Autism. She has also supported causes through her workplace by helping with Farm to Table fundraising for the Canadian Kidney Foundation and organizing donations and shopping for Christmas Families.

Michelle volunteers at the Big Ex to help with financial tracking, supports the Salvation Army Kettle Fund and helped organize a float that was entered in Bridgewater's first Pride Parade in 2024. Michelle spent 12 years as a Girl Guide leader in Bridgewater, served for five years as a cookie coordinator and helped organize a Girl Guide trip to Europe in 2020.

Michelle served as a volunteer firefighter and medical first responder for eight years with Oakhill and District Fire Department, where she helped with the canteen, bingo and other fundraising events. She later joined Dayspring and District Fire Department, where she has been serving for seven years and counting. She is active on several committees, including Firefighters Social, Health and Safety and Social Outreach. She also co-chaired the planning for the department's 60th anniversary this past March. She has supported women in the fire services by taking part in Female Firefighters Networking Day for the past four years.

When asked why she volunteers so much, Michelle simply says, "I just like helping people."

Municipality of the District of Argyle

Gary Seeley

Gary taught at the Wedgeport school for most of his life and retired from teaching while at the École secondaire de Par-en-Bas school. While teaching Gary volunteered many hours coaching volleyball and many other sports such as softball, soccer, and hockey. He was also involved in les Jeux de l'Acadie. His involvement included coaching, serving as president of the regional committee, and chef de mission for the province.

Since retiring from the education department, Gary has stayed very involved in his community serving as President of Le Club Acadien, Treasurer of Eel Brook Fire dept, aiding in the construction of the Chapelle in Rocco Pt. and is on the Tourism Committee for Ste Anne Du Ruisseau Church.

Gary is always looking to make his community a better place to live by mowing and building picnic tables for the local park and maintaining the local wharfs. We has also taken the lead in putting up signs identifying the villages of Eel Brook and Ste Anne du Ruisseau. He is always ready to lend a helping hand to anyone in need.

Municipality of the District of Chester

Firman Young

Firman has become a crucial part of our community. He volunteers with the Hubbards Area Lions Club, the Hubbards Heritage Society and as a community badminton group organizer. He also supports fundraising efforts for prostate cancer and is involved with the Western Halifax Community Learning Network. Most notably, Firman brings joy to many as Santa at community events, including the Annual Gazebo Lighting, creating special memories for children and families.

Firman's volunteerism has strengthened connection and created pride throughout the community. With his generosity, humour and willingness to step up wherever help is needed, he lifts spirits, supports important causes and brings people together across generations. His quiet leadership and long-standing dedication have touched many lives over the years and our community is better because of him.

Town of Mahone Bay

David Hennigar

David Hennigar has been named the Town of Mahone Bay's Provincial Representative Volunteer for 2026. This honour recognizes David's outstanding generosity, dedication, and the many ways he gives back to our community.

David is the kind of person who will do just about anything you ask of him. He has been a longtime volunteer at many of Mahone Bay's beloved festivals, including the Wooden Boat Festival, Scarecrow Festival, and Father Christmas Festival. He gives his time, energy, and kindness so generously, always ready to lend a hand wherever needed.

One of David's most special roles has been serving as our town's Father Christmas. Being Father Christmas is no small task, it means being in many places at once during the busy festive season. David takes this on with joy, dedication, and a touch of whimsy, spreading cheer not only in Mahone Bay but across the county as well.

You can always find David out on the streets of Mahone Bay, chatting with visitors and locals alike and bringing smiles to the young and young at heart. He truly carries the generous spirit of Father Christmas into every volunteer opportunity he says yes to. What could be better than that?

Municipality of the District of Shelburne

Frances Scott

Frances "Fran" Scott has dedicated her life to volunteering and community service, guided by a strong family belief in giving back.

Her volunteer journey began in high school through committee work and coaching youth baseball at age 16. Over the years, she coached baseball and softball at many levels and served five years as Registrar for Baseball Nova Scotia.

Athletics and community sport have always been central to her life, including volunteering with the Southwest Nova Track & Field Club from 1980–1986 and supporting the Nova Scotia Marathon

annually from 1970–1986. In 1983, recognizing a need in the community, Fran founded the Shelburne County Special Olympics and served for many years as Area Coordinator. She has also coached basketball for more than 50 years, including the past 23 years with junior and senior high school teams in Lockeport.

Beyond sports, Fran volunteered with Big Brothers Big Sisters, beginning as a Big Sister in 1983 before serving in several board positions over five years. For the past decade, she has chaired the Shelburne County Learning Network, with 30 years of involvement overall. She also chairs the Harmony Bazaar and supported the Lockeport Sea Derby for many years. Fran's kindness, leadership, and commitment have made a lasting impact across Eastern Shelburne County.

Municipality of the District of Yarmouth

Phil Demille

Phil Demille has long been an active and generous supporter of his community. He ran the Coal Shed Music Festival for 17 years, a nine-day event that consisted of over 90 acts per year. The event not only brought people together for entertainment, but also provided a valuable platform for local musicians to showcase their talents to residents and visiting tourists alike. Importantly, the festival raised funds that were donated to local organizations, including School Breakfast Programs throughout the area. He was also a 4H leader for many years.

In addition to this work, Phil and his family continue to support children locally by selling Christmas trees each year at the local hardware store, with proceeds directed to School Breakfast Programs. At a time when funding for these programs is decreasing while the need continues to grow, our schools are deeply grateful for Phil's ongoing generosity, leadership and commitment to supporting children and families in our communities. His contributions have made a meaningful and lasting difference.

Phil is very much involved in music and leads a large musical group consisting of all ages who perform at a coffee house regularly. He considers being a volunteer as part of his life.

Town of Lockeport

Seacaps Park Playground Fundraising Group

We are honoured to recognize the Seacaps Park Playground Fundraising Group as the Town of Lockeport's Volunteers of the Year for their extraordinary dedication, leadership and tireless work in moving the new community playground project forward.

Formed just over one year ago, this remarkable group has devoted countless hours to planning, fundraising, organizing events, building partnerships and engaging the community in support of a shared vision: Creating a safe, inclusive and vibrant playground space for local children and families. Their passion, determination, and teamwork have been instrumental in bringing this project to where it is today.

Through their unwavering commitment and hard work, the committee has already raised an incredible \$107,000 toward the playground project. This achievement reflects not only the perseverance of the group, but also their ability to inspire strong community support and pride. The Seacaps Park Playground Fundraising Group has strengthened community spirit, encouraged volunteerism and demonstrated what can be accomplished when dedicated individuals work together for future generations.

The Town of Lockeport is proud to celebrate their outstanding contributions and the lasting difference they are making in our community.

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

Mike Wilson

For the past nine years, Mike has been the driving force behind the New Germany and Area IWK Toy Drive, dedicating countless hours to organizing donations and ensuring its success. His behind-the-scenes efforts bring joy to many families and strengthen the community.

Mike's commitment is deeply personal. He was born with cerebral palsy and had numerous surgeries in the IWK as a child. His third daughter also spent an extended time in the hospital as a newborn and the care she received at the IWK, coupled with his own experience, inspired him to give back. Today, his daughter is a healthy, energetic eight-year-old, and Mike has turned his gratitude into meaningful action for other families facing similar challenges.

Through his leadership, Mike has created a ripple effect of generosity, bringing together businesses, service organizations, schools, and individuals. His work has helped foster a strong sense of collaboration and community spirit. A teacher by profession, he carries that same care and leadership into his volunteer efforts. Known for his reliability, kindness and tireless dedication, he leads by example.

Despite his impact, Mike remains humble, always recognizing others while avoiding attention for himself. Beyond the toy drive, he also supports the local legion and tends to Commonwealth soldiers' grave sites, reflecting his respect for history and service. His quiet dedication makes him a trusted and valued community member.

Town of Clark's Harbour **Stanley (Buddy) Jones**

Buddy faithfully gathers, sorts and transports refundables for our ongoing bottle fundraiser at OCA (Oceanview Christian Academy). This may not seem significant until you realize that we receive/collect over 200,000 bottles each year! Buddy is out and about daily picking up the bottles from our collection bins, loading up his truck, taking them home to clean and sort, and then loading them into a trailer to take to the depot. He never seeks praise or recognition, he simply works hard and gives his time to do this for the benefit of the students at OCA. We are incredibly thankful for Buddy's commitment and support.

2026 Award Recipients

Valley Region

Municipality of Clare

Stéphanie St-Pierre

Depuis la fondation de l'Association Sainte-Marie héritage et développement, Stéphanie joue un rôle central dans le succès de l'organisme. Elle croit fermement que la sauvegarde de Sainte-Marie devait se faire avec la communauté, par la communauté et pour la communauté. Elle veille constamment à ce que toutes les voix locales soient entendues, dans un esprit de transparence, de responsabilité et d'inclusion. Sous son leadership, l'association est devenue un organisme ouvert, dynamique et mobilisateur. Grâce à son engagement, Sainte-Marie a gagné en visibilité à l'échelle nationale, notamment lors de la conférence du Heritage Trust.

Le travail de Stéphanie a aussi contribué à des reconnaissances majeures en 2025, dont le Prix John Bragg et le Prix des gouverneurs de la Fiducie nationale. Cette bénévole s'exprime en faveur d'une vision ambitieuse : transformer Sainte-Marie en musée de la civilisation acadienne, mettant en valeur la résilience et le retour du peuple acadien en Nouvelle-Écosse. Au-delà de cet engagement, elle s'implique activement dans plusieurs organismes communautaires dans les domaines de l'éducation, de la culture et du patrimoine.

Since the founding of the Association Sainte-Marie Héritage et Développement, Stéphanie St-Pierre has played a central role in its success. Deeply committed, she believes the preservation of Sainte-Marie must be led with the community, by the community and for the community. Thanks to her dedication, her work has increased the site's national visibility and contributed to major recognition in 2025, including the John Bragg Award and the

National Trust Governor's Award. She also champions a vision to transform Sainte-Marie into a Museum of Acadian Civilization, highlighting the resilience and return of the Acadians to Nova Scotia. Beyond this, she is actively involved in several community organizations in the education, culture and heritage sectors.

Town of Kentville **Lynn Pulsifer**

Lynn Pulsifer has demonstrated exceptional leadership and dedication to preserving and celebrating the rich history and heritage of the Town of Kentville through her role as Executive President of the Kentville Historical Society. Since the Society's creation in 2017, Lynn has played a key role in helping to keep Kentville's history alive and ensuring that the heritage of the "Shire Town of Kings County" is preserved for future generations. Through her leadership, the Society has become an important steward of local history, fostering community pride and a deeper appreciation for the town's cultural roots.

Lynn's commitment to heritage preservation, volunteer leadership, and community education has helped create a space where Kentville's stories continue to be shared and celebrated. Her efforts, along with the support of many dedicated volunteers, ensure that the history and cultural identity of our community remain vibrant and accessible.

Town of Berwick **Tim Steadmen**

Tim Steadmen's dedication, generosity and quiet leadership have strengthened our community for decades. A lifelong resident of the Berwick area, Tim was born and raised in South Berwick and has called the Town of Berwick home for the past 50 years. For 38 years, he has been a proud and dedicated member of the Lions Club, contributing countless hours to initiatives that bring people together and support those in need.

Much of Tim's impact happens behind the scenes. He is the person who arrives early, stays late and makes sure every detail is taken care of. He sets up the hall, organizes volunteers, runs the bar and steps into whatever role is needed to ensure events are successful. His dependability and willingness to help have made him an invaluable part of the Lions Club and a trusted community volunteer.

Tim has also generously supported the Town of Berwick and the local Food Bank. He consistently steps forward when help is needed, never seeking recognition or praise. His decades of reliable service have helped build a stronger, more connected and caring community, creating a volunteer legacy that will be felt for years to come.

Town of Annapolis Royal

Christine Igot

Christine Igot moved to Annapolis Royal in 2012 and she has been involved in many volunteer community projects since her arrival. She is past president of the Friends of the Annapolis Pool Society and while president of the Annapolis Royal Twinning Committee, she was instrumental in raising awareness of the importance of the merchant explorer Dugua de Mons to the history of our region and in our connection to his birthplace of Royan, France.

Christine presently serves as secretary for the Friends of the Annapolis Royal Library Society and has joined the board of the newly formed Lambs Lake and Area Stewardship Society. She is also a member of the Annapolis District Drama Group and plays the flute in the Annapolis Basin Community Band.

Christine became Town Crier of Annapolis Royal in 2022 and she is Canada's only bilingual female Town Crier. In this volunteer role, she serves as an ambassador of the Town. She spends every Saturday morning between May and October at the Farmers' and Traders' market greeting citizens and visitors. Christine made over 95 proclamations in 2025 and leads parades, opens businesses, attends community events and participates in flag raisings and official ceremonies. In 2024, she was showcased in a French (France) television documentary highlighting the French and Acadian history of this region.

Town of Middleton

Michael Toole & Jody Spidle

For decades, Fire Chief Mike Toole and 2nd Deputy Chief Jody Spidle have dedicated themselves to protecting the Town of Middleton while building a fire department rooted in leadership, service and community.

With over 28 years of service, Chief Toole has provided visionary leadership, strengthening relationships with municipal leaders, community organizations, businesses and residents. Through his commitment to securing funding, modernizing equipment, promoting fire prevention and building regional partnerships, he has helped create a stronger and more resilient fire service for Middleton and the surrounding area.

For the past 24 years, Deputy Chief Spidle has been the steady and dependable force behind the scenes, ensuring firefighters are trained, prepared and supported. Known for his calm leadership, technical expertise and dedication to mentoring new volunteers, he has played an essential role in developing the next generation of firefighters and fostering a welcoming environment where volunteers feel valued and empowered to succeed.

Together, Mike and Jody have created a department that is proud to serve its community, both in times of emergency and through countless community events, including parades, school activities, holiday celebrations, fundraising initiatives and local traditions. Their collaborative leadership has inspired a culture of volunteerism that saw Middleton Fire Department members contribute more than 12,000 volunteer hours in 2025 through emergency response, training, community outreach, fundraising and summer duty coverage.

Through their integrity, humility, and unwavering commitment to public service, Mike Toole and Jody Spidle have strengthened not only the Middleton Fire Department but the entire community, making them truly deserving recipients of Provincial Volunteer recognition.

Town of Wolfville

Greg & Gaëtane Archibald

Gaëtane and Greg are the managers of Valley After the Bell (VATB), a food security charity that provides food to school children on weekends. VATB supports over 200 children at 15 schools throughout Kings and Hants counties to try and fill the gap for children who may be served by school breakfast and lunch programs but still come to school hungry on Monday mornings. The program began several years ago, but Greg and Gaëtane became managers when the valley branch moved to the County Fair Mall two years ago.

Their work is essential to the success of this operation. Greg and Gaëtane coordinate the activities of over 20 volunteers, source and transport food items to the store, coordinate distribution of food bags to individual schools, organize fundraisers, fill in for sick or absent volunteers and take shifts in the store on a regular basis - each putting in well over thirty hours per week of their time. Both Gaëtane and Greg also serve on VATB's Board of Directors. Put simply, they are the heart and soul of Valley After the Bell.

Village of New Minas

Mick Tanner

Mick is a lifelong resident of New Minas whose dedication to youth basketball has made a lasting impact on countless young athletes and families in our community. Through his passion, leadership, and tireless volunteer efforts, he has become a respected and valued mentor for both boys and girls involved in local basketball programs.

This past year alone, he coached the Evangeline Middle School Boys Basketball team and the Axe Basketball Club, while also leading teams including U12 Girls, U10 Boys, and U14 Boys. He has also teamed up with the County of Kings and Port Williams recreation for the past few years to host a 3 on 3 tournament held for local youth ages 10-14.

In addition to his head coaching responsibilities, Mick generously volunteers as an assistant coach for the U8 "Lil Hatchets," helping introduce the youngest players to the fundamentals of basketball in a positive, supportive and encouraging environment.

Mick's commitment extends far beyond practices and games. He has played a significant role in growing and strengthening the local basketball community through organizing and hosting of several successful tournaments including the Heart of the Eagle Tournament, Girls Got Game Classic and the Luck of the Court Tournament. These events have provided meaningful opportunities for young athletes to develop their skills, build confidence and foster friendships while promoting sportsmanship and community spirit throughout the region.

The Village of New Minas deeply appreciates Mick's years of dedication, leadership and unwavering support for youth in our community. His selfless volunteerism, positive influence and commitment to creating opportunities for young athletes have had a profound and lasting impact on local basketball and the lives of so many families.

Town of Digby

Charles Hill

Charles Hill has been a dedicated volunteer with Special Olympics for over 30 years, helping build and strengthen the program in Digby over the past four years. As a coach and mentor, he supports athletes year-round in bowling and bocce while organizing tournaments, community breakfasts, and fundraising efforts to help athletes attend events like the Canadian Special Olympics Summer Games. Charles is a passionate advocate who fosters an inclusive and supportive environment for all participants.

Municipality of the District of Digby

Clifton Titus

Clifton Titus is a dedicated volunteer with over 20 years of service as a firefighter with the Westport Fire Department, where he served as Captain and Deputy Chief. A lifelong member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 92, he has supported countless events and initiatives, including recreation programs, bottle drives and community fundraisers. Clifton has also been a strong supporter of youth, coaching baseball and contributing to school sports and local clubs. His commitment to service has left a lasting legacy in both his family and community.

West Hants Regional Municipality

Roger Taylor

For over 20 years, Roger has shared his remarkable talents as a conductor, composer and arranger with the Four Seasons Community Orchestra, enriching audiences and nurturing local musical talent. His passion for music and community has also inspired the creation of numerous performing groups over the years, including choral groups, small ensembles, bands and other orchestral groups. Through his leadership, Roger has earned the

respect and admiration of countless musicians and music lovers alike. His dedication to collaboration and creativity continues to make a lasting impact on the cultural vitality of West Hants.

Roger's exceptional volunteerism has been recognized many times before, including honours such as ATV Maritimer of the Week, The Rotary Paul Harris Fellowship, the Nova Scotia Department of Education Arts Award, the Mud Creek Volunteer Award and the Queen Elizabeth II Award. West Hants Regional Municipality is honoured to celebrate Roger Taylor's decades of service and leadership, and we thank him for his unwavering commitment to our community.

Village of Port Williams

Sandra Nichols

A lifelong Port Williams resident and former post office employee, Sandra has spent many years volunteering her time and supporting local initiatives. Sandra has been a dependable volunteer with the Port Williams and District Lions Club (PWDLC), regularly helping with catering events, community suppers, fundraising activities and the annual Village Wide Yard Sale.

Club members describe her as someone who is always willing to help whenever needed and her contributions have supported the Lions Club's to provide services and organize community programs throughout Port Williams.

Beyond her work with the PWDLC, Sandra is deeply involved with St. John's Anglican Church, where she has served as Warden since 1999. She also acts as Secretary for both the Church Cemetery Committee and the Starrs Point Cemetery Committee. In addition, Sandra supports recreation and wellness activities within the village and is known as a friendly, encouraging presence in the community.

Municipality of the County of Annapolis

Jerry and Maureen Publow

Jerry and Maureen Publow are outstanding examples of community volunteerism in Annapolis County, dedicating countless hours to making their community stronger, more connected and more caring.

For over 12 years, they have organized and hosted the annual Bridgetown Christmas Dinner, a free event that brings people together each holiday season. From planning and preparing meals to welcoming guests, their efforts ensure no one feels alone during a time meant for connection.

Their generosity also extends to the Centre of Rural Aging and Health (CORA), where they volunteer their time creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for seniors. Jerry's 20 years of service as a volunteer firefighter, along with his continued work in fire safety education, reflects a deep and ongoing commitment to public safety and community well-being.

Both Jerry and Maureen are actively involved in numerous other local initiatives, including Maureen's contributions to the Bridgetown Area Community Fund. Annapolis County is deeply grateful for their decades of kindness, dedication and service. They truly embody the spirit of volunteerism.

Municipality of the County of Kings

Brian Hirtle

Brian Hirtle is a deeply committed community volunteer whose impact spans decades and numerous organizations. His service is marked by long-term leadership, quiet reliability and a willingness to help wherever needed.

He currently serves as Chair of the Grand View Manor Board and sits on the Grand View Manor Foundation Board, supporting governance and fundraising for seniors' care. He also serves on the steering committee exploring the future use of the former Grand View Manor.

Brian's dedication to public service is exemplified by his 35 years as Chair of the Berwick and District Fire Commission, demonstrating exceptional leadership and commitment to public safety. For the past five years, he has supported the Jr. A Wildcats through sponsorship and season ticket efforts. At the Berwick Curling Club, Brian serves on the Board and Finance Committee, co-heads stick curling, bartends, assists with events and supports KMCC meetings as needed.

He is also widely recognized for leading fundraising barbecues for community events and tournaments. In Burlington, Brian has chaired the Cemetery Committee for 20 years and volunteers annually at the Canada Day Celebration. He has now retired from his position as President of the Kings-West PC association, a role he held for over 20 years at Acadie-Annapolis, formerly known as West-Nova. His decades of hands-on service have made a lasting and meaningful difference.

Glooscap First Nation

Dennis Johnson

Dennis Johnson, a proud Band Member of Glooscap First Nation, is a dedicated and valued member of our Maintenance Crew whose commitment to community service extends far beyond his daily responsibilities.

Dennis consistently volunteers his time and energy to support community events, helping ensure that gatherings, celebrations and cultural activities are successful and welcoming for all. His willingness to lend a hand wherever needed reflects his strong sense of community spirit and dedication to serving others.

In addition to his contributions through community events, Dennis actively supports Dragonfly Haven Therapeutic Farm, a Glooscap Band Member-owned farm that provides a unique and meaningful space for wellness, connection and healing. Through his assistance and encouragement, he helps strengthen an initiative that benefits both individuals and the broader community.

Dennis's reliability, generosity, and commitment to helping others make him an outstanding volunteer and a positive role model within Glooscap First Nation. His contributions have made a lasting impact, and we are proud to recognize him for his continued service and dedication.

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2026 Specialty Award Recipients



Newcomer Volunteer Award

Tavneet Kaur

Tavneet Kaur has made an extraordinary impact on communities across Nova Scotia through her leadership and dedication to supporting newcomers. A first-generation immigrant who moved to the province in 2021, she is an alumna of St. Francis Xavier University, a secondary mathematics educator with Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education, and is beginning a Master of Science in Mathematics at Dalhousie University this September.

Tavneet's journey from international student to community leader is rooted in her own experience of navigating belonging in a new country. Recognizing gaps in support for newcomers, she founded X Helping Hands Association to build spaces where diverse voices are celebrated. Her work has focused extensively on newcomers, immigrants, BIPOC communities, including Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities, across the province.

Since arriving in Nova Scotia, Tavneet has volunteered with organizations supporting Indigenous youth, multiculturalism, newcomer inclusion, including the X Project, Connecting Math to Our Lives and Communities (CMTOLC), EduNova, Atlantic Council for International Cooperation Halifax (ACIC), Clean Foundation, and the Centre for Migrant Workers Rights. Through X Helping Hands, she has created opportunities for cultural exchange, mentorship, wellness, storytelling and creative programming that brings communities together.

An extraordinary team leader and community member, Tavneet is known for building genuine relationships and empowering those around her to lead. Through compassion, innovation and unwavering commitment, she has become a trusted community leader whose efforts continue to strengthen social connections, foster cultural understanding and enrich lives across Nova Scotia.

Her dedication exemplifies the true spirit of volunteerism and makes her a deserving recipient of Nova Scotia Newcomer Volunteer Award 2026.



Youth Volunteer Award

Darcy Eygun

Darcy Eygun is a passionate community leader whose commitment to service has taken him from his home province of Nova Scotia to communities around the world. Guided by the belief that every opportunity carries a responsibility to give back, Darcy

has dedicated his time to supporting causes that strengthen communities, empower others and create lasting change.

Raised in Nova Scotia by immigrant parents, Darcy developed a deep appreciation for the province that helped shape his life. From volunteering to clean Halifax beaches as a child to leading the founding of both of Nova Scotia's only two Amnesty International chapters, his dedication to service has always been rooted in action and gratitude for the community that gave him so much.

His volunteer work has extended well beyond Canada, including community development research in Colombia and The Gambia and a posting as a development officer to the Malawian government, working alongside smallholder farming cooperatives to improve access to knowledge and resources that support sustainable livelihoods. He has also represented youth perspectives at UNESCO and NATO, advocating for greater inclusion of young voices in global decision-making. Wherever his work takes him, you can recognize Darcy by the Bluenose pin he carries as a reminder of the province he calls home.

This summer, inspired by Terry Fox, Darcy will undertake his most ambitious volunteer initiative yet, running more than 1,000 kilometres across Nova Scotia in just 23 days to raise funds for Feed Nova Scotia. His journey is both a personal tribute and a powerful expression of gratitude for the province and communities that have shaped his life.



Family Volunteer Award

The Das Family

Over the past five years, Ansu, Urby, and their daughter, An-kita, have demonstrated a commitment to strengthening communities across Nova Scotia through their

compassion, leadership and unwavering dedication to service. Together, they have supported initiatives focused on pandemic relief, disaster response, senior advocacy, food security, student integration, public awareness campaigns, and community well-being making a lasting impact on countless lives.

During the pandemic, despite having a vulnerable family member at home, Ansu and Urby choose not to sit at home, but stepped forward to help others. At a time when protective equipment was in critically short supply, they worked tirelessly to procure and deliver face shields, masks, gloves, and PPE for Northwood and frontline healthcare workers. Their willingness to put the needs of their community first during such an uncertain time reflected remarkable courage and selflessness.

Their dedication to service continued long after the peak of the pandemic. Ansu ran awareness campaigns, strengthened community connections through digital outreach initiatives with Breast Cancer Action Nova Scotia, while the family volunteered with Feed Nova Scotia to help address food insecurity. Urby also played an important role in supporting communities affected by the Nova Scotia wildfires and floods, assisting relief efforts during times of crisis.

Together, the family has also supported seniors, participated in the Walk for Dignity, contributed to school and community initiatives, and donated blood to help save lives. Through every act of service, they have built stronger, more connected communities while inspiring others to give back.

Their generosity, resilience, and quiet leadership embody the spirit of volunteerism, making them deserving recipients of this Family Volunteer Award.



Nova Scotia Strong Award

Harkiran Kaur

Harkiran Kaur has demonstrated exceptional leadership, compassion and resilience through her dedication to supporting newcomers during times of crisis. Following the 2024 Halifax Walmart tragedy, she responded with remarkable urgency, providing immediate, on-the-ground support to the victim's family

within 24 hours. Recognizing a significant gap in culturally responsive crisis services, Harkiran transformed a moment of profound loss into an opportunity to create meaningful change.

With the vital support and partnership of the Maritime Sikh Society, she established the Crisis Intervention Program for Newcomers. The initiative ensures individuals receive compassionate, culturally appropriate care during severe hardship. Harkiran developed a multidisciplinary network of volunteer professionals in medical, mental health, legal and social services who provide pro-bono assistance during peak crises, including navigating complex end-of-life arrangements and repatriation.

To date, the Crisis Intervention Program has supported more than 30 families. The program continues to evolve to meet community needs, recently expanding to include specialized programming dedicated to supporting newcomer women and girls following a recent tragedy involving a mother and infant.

Beyond direct crisis response, Harkiran organizes educational summits, builds community resilience and collaborates closely with local government, law enforcement and service organizations to foster safety, trust and inclusion. Through visionary leadership, empathy and an unwavering commitment to serving others, Harkiran Kaur has created a lasting legacy of care, ensuring compassion remains at the heart of crisis response across Nova Scotia.



Artist for the 2026 Nova Scotia Strong Award **Kim Kenney**

A self-taught folk artist from Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore, Kim Kenney has been exploring the arts for as long as she can remember. A longtime member of the Eastern Shore Artisans Association, she has experimented with a variety of artistic mediums, most recently focusing on folk art painting.

Her work is inspired by the local communities and rural landscapes of Nova Scotia. She loves working with bright colours and incorporating whimsical elements that bring her paintings to life. Through her art, she celebrates the character, charm, and spirit of the communities around her.

She is grateful for the opportunity to share her work and thanks you for your interest in her art.