

Nominate your local heroes for Aurora's 2024 Community Recognition Awards

Aurora residents help make the community a better place each and every day, but all too often their efforts go unsung.

Now is the time to change that as the Town of Aurora opens up nominations for the 2024 Community Recognition Award.

The Community Recognition Awards (CRA) are being accepted at Town Hall now through March 29.

This year's program will recognize the following categories:

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD ? Awarded to individuals with 5, 10, 15, 20, or more years of service.

YOUTH VOLUNTEER AWARD -- Awarded to a youth up to the age of 19 who, through their volunteer efforts, has made a significant contribution to the community and has demonstrated their commitment to being a positive leader today and in the future.

OLDER ADULT VOLUNTEER AWARD ? Presented to a senior who is 55 years of age or older who, through their volunteer efforts, has made a significant contribution to the community and has demonstrated their commitment to being a positive leader today and in the future. (Formerly the Senior Volunteer Award)

GREEN AWARD ? Honouring an individual, business or community organization that supports the protection, preservation, sustainability or conservation of our natural environment. This award celebrates those who share the Town's commitment to creating a greener community.

ARTS AND CULTURE AWARD ? Presented to an individual or group that has enhanced our community through their support or promotion of arts and culture, including music, visual, performing, or the literary arts.

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD ? This award is presented to an individual, business or community organization that has significantly enhanced the Town through their contribution, commitment and leadership in the areas of charitable giving, civic engagement, community events or community spirit.

GOOD NEIGHBOUR AWARD ? Honouring someone who embodies what it means to be a good neighbour. This award recognizes and celebrates the simple acts of kindness and compassion that help create connected and vibrant neighbourhoods.

GOOD BUSINESS AWARD ? Presented to an Aurora business that has shown its commitment to assisting Aurora's economic prosperity, corporate responsibility, and community involvement through its ongoing support of charitable causes, events, or programs.

INCLUSIVITY AWARD ? Presented to an individual, group or business which has contributed to making the Town of Aurora a more accessible and/or inclusive place to live, work and play for all people regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or disability.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AWARD ? Presented to an individual or organization that is dedicated to the development, promotion or support of initiatives that improve community safety. This award recognizes how safer communities only happen when individuals take action to make a difference.

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR ? This individual is selected by the Office of the Mayor in consultation with a small group of dedicated community volunteers. The award recipient has demonstrated all-round community involvement rather than a specific activity or contribution.

"Aurora, as we all know, is an incredible place to work, play and to live," says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. "That is only possible because of the selflessly and tirelessly volunteers that come forward to contribute to Aurora whether it is through Aurora's beauty, whether it is making Aurora greener, whether it is lending a hand to make a good neighbour. There are so much good things happening in Aurora and we only have this once-a-year recognition ceremony. The program, we really rely on the community filling out the nominations to let us know who our local heroes are."

Among the class of 2023, Ware says she was particularly struck by Youth Volunteer Award winner Laila Doran who described "how her nana had taught her that you should give with the right hand and the left hand must not know in terms of how we continually give back. That really stuck with me that a youth of the upcoming generation has that kind of perspective, it really reminds you that we're in good hands for the future."

This year, Ware encourages members of the community and potential nominators to pay particular attention to the Community Safety and Good Business Awards. There are so many great potential nominees in these areas throughout the community Ware says they would love to see "a few more submissions in those areas."

"With the Community Safety Award, when you feel safe sometimes it is taken for granted but there are definitely heroes in the community who are continually working to try to keep Aurora safe," she says. "For instance, last year's winner was Central York Girls Hockey, which fundraised for the AED machine in Machell Park. The nominator for that group didn't even know who made the AED possible. She just knew that now when she walks through Machell Park she feels safer knowing there is a machine accessible. That completely achieved what Central York Girls Hockey set out to do. It was nice not only seeing that story but hearing it from the nominator's perspective and also recognizing the hockey team because they would have had to fundraise for a lengthy period of time to make that happen. It was a total full circle of success and appreciation."

"We always try to stress upon the nominator to provide concrete examples and to write the submission under the understanding the committee does not know who this person or organization is. It's also being concise but fully answering the questions [on the nomination form] and not making assumptions that we know the person or we know the organization. Whatever it takes to really make them stand out is really the way to go and all nominations do receive a letter of acknowledgement from the Town that their efforts have not gone unnoticed and they have been nominated for the award. Whether they win it or they don't win it, they're still being recognized."

"Don't delay. Definitely nominate somebody today. We all have a good neighbour, we all know a youth who stands out. There is no shortage of incredible older adults out there, so many businesses giving back throughout the community, so many organizations that are really demonstrating community leadership qualities. Aurora continues to be a special place and this is one project where we can really, really acknowledge that and celebrate that."

For more information on this year's Community Recognition Awards, including nomination forms and criteria, visit aurora.ca/cra.

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