

Citizen of Character Award for the 6-10 age category:

Matthew Levy

Matthew raised \$120.00 for the earthquake ravaged people of Haiti by having his friends and family sponsor him for swimming lengths. He swam a combination of front and back crawl and whip kick to complete 21 continuously lengths in half an hour. He also donated his own chore money to help the cause.

In addition, Matthew also demonstrated his honesty by turning into the school a cell phone he found.

Matthew demonstrated courage, initiative, perseverance, respect, responsibility, compassion, and optimism, by thinking of and helping people in need.

Matthew is a very caring young man who consistently puts other peoples' needs ahead of his own.

Citizen of Character Award for the 11-15 age category:

Matthew Massel

Matthew Massel has overcome many obstacles in his life, including high anxiety, learning disabilities and Tourette's syndrome. Despite these challenges, Matthew has become a junior ambassador and spokesman for children's mental health and specifically for the York Centre for Children Youth and Families. His goal is to raise awareness about children's mental health and to let others know that they are not alone.

Matthew played an active role with the local media on the opening of a new building for the York Centre, which he also helped fundraise for.

In November 2009, Matthew spoke at the Ontario legislature for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children.

Matthew advocated for increased funding to help children with mental illness and agreed to have his taped speech used by the Advocate for Children and Youth's website.

Matthew also spoke in December 2009 in front of 1000 people at the benefit concert for the York Centre and his taped speech will be used by the York Region District School Board.

Despite Matthew's challenges, his optimism and courage continue to shine through. Matthew takes the initiative to include others, show compassion, fight for what is fair, and educate those around him.

His perseverance for a more accepting world is astounding.

Citizen of Character Award for the 16-18 age category:

Shanee Bailey

Shanee is presently a Grade 12 student at Langstaff Secondary School where she has displayed a high commitment to school involvement and the school community.

She has been both a player and team manager for the junior and senior girls' basketball teams as well as being team manager for the girls' volleyball team and boys' basketball team.

She is an executive member of the Student Athletic Association which organizes intramurals, fundraisers, athletic banquets, school assemblies and spirit functions. In addition to Shanee's involvement in school sports, she has also been an active member of the Multicultural Club, Yearbook Club and Black History Club in grades 9 and 10.

In Grade 11 she joined the Announcement Team and won "Queen of Spirit Week" in October 2007 for her dedication, enthusiasm, positive attitude, creativity and imagination.

Shanee has consistently demonstrated many of the qualities associated with character education.

She is responsible, respectful and shows initiative and exemplifies natural energy and enthusiasm towards all her endeavours.

Citizen of Character Award – Adult Category

Marco Baldassara

Marco is a full time student at Seneca College studying Police Foundations during the day, is employed part-time and still manages to find the opportunity to make a difference in his community.

He volunteers with York Regional Police as a Special Events Volunteer, Community Home Assistance to seniors, the Gary Durrant Basketball Club, the Terry Fox Run, the Rogers Cable Auction, and in addition, Marco is also very active within his church.

Marco's dedication and commitment is a wonderful testament to his on going devotion to the community.

Marco brings life to the motto "Deeds Speak" and is a wonderful ambassador to youth. Marco has learned that actions speak louder than words and demonstrates character in action in all areas of his volunteerism.

He has unquestionably shown initiative, inclusiveness, and compassion and will continue to have a positive influence on his community.

Catholic District School Board School of Character Award

St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School

St Joan of Arc Catholic High School has this past year experienced the sudden and tragic death of 3 of its students in two separate traffic incidents. The students, staff and administrative team supported one another as well as the parents and families of the deceased students, with dignity, respect, love, compassion, creativity, prayer and liturgy and hope for the future.

When their schoolmates tragically died, students memorialized them through ribbon campaigns, bulletin board memorials, displays and AV presentations with music.

The school chapel was a place where students and staff gathered to pray, grieve, remember and support each other. The compassion and love shown was truly moving.

These young people are a credit to their peers, for their courage, compassion, love and hope in the face of such tragic and senseless losses.

The fashion in which the students faced these horrible losses and the manner in which they responded with love, faith, creativity, healing and the hope showed that they can and will move forward, always keeping the memory of their lost friends in their hearts.

St. Emily Catholic School

St. Emily Catholic School is a school that shows numerous character attributes on a daily basis. Through the non-stop efforts of administrators, teachers, parents and students, they have created a school community that truly cares about what takes place inside and outside of their school environment.

The dedication of all involved is shown through the various initiatives that the school has undertaken: Angel Hair for Kids in support of Cancer Research, anti-bullying campaign, Oprah Ambassador Club in support of global initiatives, the Smiles of Innocence Christmas Toy Campaign and many others.

St. Emily's anti-bullying campaign has created students in their school who genuinely care about one another and go out of their way on a daily basis to make those in the school feel welcome at all times.

St. Emily's Oprah Ambassador Club has done both local and global activities to make their students realize that one person truly can make a difference. In the last three years, the school has raised over \$25,000 to send to organizations such as Free the Children, Heart and Stroke, Sharelife and Rose of Sharon and collected over 1000 gifts each year at Christmas to send to local charities in need.

St. Emily has done numerous activities to make their students in the school active citizens in our society who do what they can to make a difference not only in our community but our world at large.

York Region District School Board School of Character Award

Rogers Public School

Year after year, the teachers, parents and students of Rogers Public School work together to make their community a better place to live.

The students demonstrate compassion and responsibility with annual campaigns such as the loonies and toniest drive, a Halloween for Hunger campaign in support of local families in need and a Christmas food drive for the Salvation Army.

Rogers various student clubs are also making a difference in the region and across the globe. The student's "Me to We" raises thousands of dollars every year for various global projects, including clean water and sanitation for communities in India and Haiti.

The Rogers Environmental Club helps students learn to respect the environment and takes action to educate the school community to do the same and the 74 member Knitting Club provides handmade blankets through Project Linus to children who are seriously ill, traumatized, or in need.

Rogers Public School also demonstrates inclusiveness through its high level of parent involvement in the school. Parents coordinate lunch programs, work in the library, and volunteer in the classroom with guided reading programs.

Rogers Public School demonstrates the courage, compassion and initiative to make a difference in the greater community.

Rosedale Heights Public School

Rosedale Heights provides a warm, inclusive and compassionate environment for everyone who enters the building. The staff ensures that all children grown and learn and develop responsibility and commitment to their friends, family and teachers.

Many activities take place each year that demonstrate character and commitment to the community at large.

A student with special needs and his Educational Assistant organized a "Loonies and Toonies" fundraiser for Haiti and within a week had collected \$755 which was then donated to the Red Cross.

A food drive for the Aurora Food pantry was organized by a Grade 7 student who created the posters and collected non-perishable items for the food bank in York Region.

The monthly teachings and integration of the 10 Board Character Traits help to ensure that the school community is collaborative and inclusive and the types of initiatives above show the results of that teaching.

School of Character-Privately Funded Educational Institution Award

The Country Day School

The Country Day School's motto is Integrity – Learning – Purpose and they integrate this into all that they do.

In their annual report the Chairman of the Board spoke about the phrase strength of character and stated "... perhaps this year more than ever, our motto seemed to resonate loud and clear. In uncertain times, when decisions are not always easily made, the quality and strength of our character becomes apparent. This strength of character, or integrity, does not become established overnight. It must be developed over time. When our valedictorian spoke about integrity, it was clear to me that at the Country Day School, integrity is more than an ideal; it is a way of life."

The class valedictorian of 2009 stated "Integrity is knowing what we believe in and staying true to it. You do this with the charitable causes that you work to help, the activities that you selflessly dedicate yourselves to, and by keeping your head up when you know you can't possibly win the game".

At The Country Day School they endeavour to offer not only a great educational experience, but also to build a person of sound and honourable character.

Educator of Character Award

Scott Brown

Scott Brown is a grade 5 teacher at Little Rouge Public School in Markham with a passion for social justice, global awareness and environmental conscientiousness. Scott helped found the school's first student social team, "Be the Change," but everyone who has had the pleasure of stepping into his classroom knows that his passion goes much deeper than leading a club could demonstrate.

Scott Brown's classroom décor itself, including his students' work that fills his bulletin boards, personify his teachings that have been integrated into every subject, unit, and strand of the Ontario curriculum.

Just a few of the programs Scott has initiated in his classroom, school, and community are the Global Education Activity Resource literacy program, World Water Day poster assignment, Take Action writing contest, and a Vow of Silence Day for children's rights.

It is clear that Scott is a truly inspirational teacher who not only lives and demonstrates the character traits, but also encourages his students to become active, contributing citizens of social justice through positive change. Knowing that there is a teacher that inspires so many youth and peers to make a life-long commitment to making positive changes in our world gives hope for our future.

Change our World – Environmental Award

Jesse Michelin

Jesse is in Grade 2 at San Marco Catholic School and helps the head custodian every day at lunch with the recycling program.

Jesse spends most of his lunch hour collecting the various items for recycling from the individual classrooms.

At this young age Jesse is already showing the character attributes of initiative, responsibly and respect for his surroundings.

With a start like this he will surely go on in life to make a lasting environmental impact and Change our world!

Change our World – Social Justice Award

David Heard

David is unselfish in helping others and his efforts to reduce bullying are substantial.

David is known for his courage in telling his story of abuse and bullying and champions the issue of forgiveness.

He provides peer support to those struggling with issues of abuse and is the co-founder of Rise and Shine a free breakfast program on Saturday mornings at the Aurora United Church.

Active in the community, David contributes to the weekly fresh produce at the food pantry and volunteers at the Welcoming Arms and for Students for Students.

David started the bread network to the local food pantry, helps with clothing collections for “the Clothes Closet”, and championed the Aurora Spirit Walk.

He has beaten the odds and is a community role model to youth and struggling adults.

As well David is returning to school this fall to pursue his social services worker designation. David Heard demonstrates character in action with his “heart of a lion” and by showing compassion and inclusiveness every day to others in need.

Wendel Clark Sports Award

Jade Scognamilo

Jade has successfully raised over \$50,000 for the neo-natal unit at Sick Kids Hospital.

At 16 years of age, she set the goal of swimming Lake Ontario to help meet her fundraising goal. Done in 19 hours, 59 minutes and 49 seconds, Jade now holds the record of the youngest person to swim across this body of water and Sick Kids has benefited from the purchase of a new infant incubator because of her efforts.

In 2008, in another fundraising effort for Sick Kids, Jade broke and holds the records for the youngest and fastest swim across Lake Erie.

Jade has proven herself not only an outstanding citizen of The Country Day School but an incredible member of her greater community. She has devoted herself to helping others, and has done so with humility and without pretence. Jade has a passion for life and consistently demonstrates her desire to leave her mark.

She shows a tremendous awareness for the world around her and embodies true philanthropy. She is a role model not only for her peers but for everyone as she shows us that dreams can be realized. With humility and grace, Jade demonstrates a courage, optimism, perseverance and initiative and shows a spirit that is a model for us all.

Pursuing Character through the Arts Award

Theresa Calderone

Theresa Calderone has inspired her Art department and the entire school community at St. Joan of Arc Catholic High School through her curriculum initiatives and her vibrant personality.

Last year Theresa developed a “Desire for Change Symposium” for students across York Region with a goal “to build and create an inclusive, respectful and caring learning community.”

Theresa designed and implemented a Peer Leadership course at her school where senior students partner with students from the Functional Life Skills program to develop their dramatic talents and form mutual learning relationships as they create drama performances.

Theresa actively promotes art to the greater school community with her annual Art’s Night, two Music Nights, and Theatre Productions. And she insists that all students in her courses see live performances supporting local theatre groups or visit Art Galleries and Museums.

Theresa is a model example of someone who continually strives to respond to the needs of students. She demonstrates responsibility and flexibility through her leadership to students and staff at St. Joan of Arc. Theresa lives through the arts, as one human being sharing, laughing, learning, and playing with all others in the beauty and mystery of our time together.

Business of Character – Profit Award

York Region Media Group

York Region Media Group (YRMG) publishes nine newspapers across York Region and hosts yorkregion.com and northofthecity.ca. Their employees take to heart their vision: To make a positive difference in our communities.

With pride and passion, they have embraced the values adopted on becoming a Character Business, including respect, responsibility, initiative, honesty, optimism, fairness and integrity.

In their intentions and actions, they strive to make a positive difference daily – by helping others, by contributing or by upholding their values in their offices, communities and homes. They are active in organizations and events that strive to help others, they are members of boards, including United Way, Character Community Foundation, 3 hospital foundations and York Region Arts Council.

Annually, they sponsor and walk in Relay for Life for the Cancer Society. They race in dragon boats for the United Way and bowl for Big Brothers/Sisters. With initiative and compassion they launched the YRMG Santa Fund, helping hundreds of needy families – 133 in 2009 alone – supported by employees, customers and readers.

Their annual Celebration of the Arts event has provided support to hundreds of talented local artists and performers to pursue their dreams through bursaries and performance opportunities.

They strive daily to make a positive difference – the ultimate act of Character – in the lives they touch every day.

Business of Character - Not for Profit Award

Community Living Newmarket/Aurora District

This group serves Newmarket, Aurora, East Gwillimbury, sections of King and Whitchurch Stouffville. They support people with developmental disabilities to enable them to live independently, to work in the community and to participate.

This nomination highlights two specific activities they are involved in this year:

First, a Random Act of Kindness Week where Community Living clients went out into the community to perform good deeds for random people with the hope that this kindness will get passed on to those who benefited from it.

The second involves four clients of Community Living travelling to the Olympics with their support workers to act as official Olympic volunteers at Canada Hockey Place after having fundraised to cover the cost of the trip. They were the only organization of this kind volunteering at the games.

Through Random Acts of Kindness, they are showing respect and compassion for others and in volunteering; they demonstrate courage and responsibility for supporting our Canadian Olympics and the participants from around the world.

These examples of demonstrating positive character attributes tell us that no matter whom we are in society, in the community or in business, a client or support person, no matter what our abilities – we all can make the world a better place through living and demonstrating good character.

Business of Character - Service Organization Award

Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care, Markham

Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care in Markham is one of 5 Yee Hong facilities in the GTA, and the only one in York Region. It is a non-profit service organization providing residential, health, social and emotional care to seniors in the Chinese community.

They have always demonstrated character in the way they serve seniors, how they treat their staff and how they operate in the broader community.

Yee Hong treats its seniors with great respect and compassion, cultural sensitivity, optimism stressing wellness.

They have a non-Chinese wing for seniors from other cultures and when Markhaven Home for Seniors had to close temporarily to be re-built, Yee Hong took in many of the Markhaven seniors and loved and cared for them inclusively even though they were from other cultures.

Yee Hong management and staff demonstrate compassion, inclusiveness, respect and responsibility and show what it means to work and live with character.

Business Leader of Character Award

Tom Ingersoll

Tom brings to life the York Regional Police motto “Deeds Speak” through his long-time involvement with the Community Safety Village and his 13 years as member of the Board of Directors for Crime Stoppers of York Region.

Tom started working on the Community Safety Village project in 2001 as a staff member of Vanbots, but his involvement quickly extended to that of a community volunteer. Tom took on the vision for the Safety Village and became a true partner who believed in the project as much as did the Police Department.

Tom demonstrated character in action in several ways, most notably in taking the initiative to get a job done. He displayed a great deal of integrity when working with construction suppliers and was always optimistic that the Safety Village would be as impressive a facility as imagined. Tom demonstrated exemplary leadership and perseverance by following up contacts and assisting staff members and board members understand what all the construction plans and revisions meant.

Through the optimism and initiative Tom displayed in his business dealings, he encouraged other businesses to become involved with the Safety Village. He played a major role in creating a show piece educational facility that teaches children every day in the character attributes. It was through Tom’s outstanding business reputation that other’s wanted to become involved. Tom put his name behind this project and people believed in him.

Tom is an outstanding example of why good character matters. He is a respectful business leader who shows initiative and perseverance in working with his clients. Through his work in the community, he displays integrity, honesty, fairness and compassion in doing the absolute best job he can.

Customer Service of Character Award

Bluestone Bistro

Bluestone Bistro and its owners Melanie and Michael Mands demonstrate the character attributes in the way they serve customers and their community.

Melanie and Michael model the character attributes to their staff so that Bluestone Bistro’s customer service is second to none in York Region with complete respect, honesty, integrity and inclusiveness.

They have staff representing the entire community, cultures, faiths and all age groups and by doing so provide a welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere for their clients.

Health Care Worker of Character Award

Helen Galanis

Helen has been an Advanced Care Paramedic for several years. As a paramedic she has always performed her duties to the best of her abilities. She treats each patient and colleague with care and respect.

Though the job of a medic is not easy, Helen has gone beyond her regular role to develop a program, called the 'Nanny Blanket Drive,' that has been in place within York Region EMS for several years.

During her shifts on the ambulance she frequently saw many elderly patients with no family or source of comfort during the holidays. So, together with other volunteers that she recruited, Helen created the blanket drive.

Handmade and new blankets are gathered from co-workers, labelled with a special dedication and then distributed to the elderly and palliative patients in 3 area hospitals.

Helen has done this every year without fail.

She also lets all her volunteers know how well the blankets are received...perpetuating her optimism and showing them how they helped, in a small way, makes someone's life a little better.

Helen's program has not only provided security and comfort at a very difficult time of year for some, but it has also let others know that they too can make a difference.

Neighbourhood of Character Award

St. Peter Catholic Elementary School Community/Neighbourhood

The community of St. Peter's Catholic Elementary School were faced with great hardship when the Woodbridge tornado of August, 2009 tore through their neighbourhood, extensively damaging many homes as well as St. Peter's School.

For the first 2-1/2 months of the school year, students and staff were housed at two other York Catholic District School Board schools while St. Peter's was being cleaned, repaired and restored.

The community of St. Peter's pulled together to assist with these transitions and to contribute to the rebuilding. They endured many hardships, and showed courage and perseverance in the face of difficult circumstances.

They worked together with optimism, inclusiveness, initiative and respect and showed true character by taking responsibility for their neighbourhood and for each other

Character Hero Award

Constable Todd Snooks

Constable Nooks has been a police officer in York Region for 11 years where he has continuously been a role model to the community he serves, both at work and at home.

He has been actively involved in many community initiatives including Big Brother/Big Sisters since 1994.

He is the GTA north director for the Fellowship of Christian Police Officers, director of the Community Council at the Quaker Billage Public School, Treasurer and Sunday school superintendent and Youth Leader for the Goodwood Gospel Hall since 2007.

Constable Snooks not only demonstrates good character on a day to day basis, but he acts as a positive mentor for youth in the community.

In his current role as a Youth Coordinator with York Regional Police, he has created and implemented numerous youth initiatives in York Region that has had a truly positive impact on youth.

He possesses integrity, honesty and compassion and projects a very professional image to all members of the community.

Todd's continual attention to youth and youth issues makes him a character leader who sets a high standard from which others can learn from.

Citizen of Courage Award

Sandra Houghton

Sandra is a part time building maintenance employee with the Town of Georgina who during a committee meeting in council chambers came to the assistance of a resident who had suddenly collapsed in cardiac arrest.

Sandra, having just completed the defibrillator training course, deployed the AED device and successfully resuscitated the victim.

She showed initiative, courage and compassion in performing this life-saving action and was humble in accepting any praise for having done so.

Character Champion Award

John Havercroft

John Havercroft has a long standing commitment to the development of character in schools across York Region and in communities throughout Ontario. He worked to serve the Character Community Foundation of York Region as a founding member, on their Executive and as President overseeing significant organizational change that will serve to sustain the operations of the Foundation well in to the future.

In his role as Superintendent of Schools for the York Region District School Board, John's leadership of seven years was instrumental in ensuring that the profile of character was raised at both the school and system level.

His ability to work collaboratively with his colleagues in the school boards has helped to ensure that the character development, with all its many facets, is seen today as an integral part of the well being and success of each student and staff member.

John actively volunteered as a member of the Provincial Leadership Team and continues to be called on by Boards across the province as a resource to assist them in deepening their understanding of the positive impact character development can have on a student and an organization's success.

John is a true collaborator and is always willing to explore new ideas.

He is a valued leader and an exceptional builder of confidence and trust.

Through it all, John has remained a model of consistency and commitment to the values held by his family, his employers, and his community.

John truly "lives with character" and as a result, has "changed our world."