



2017 Character Community Awards Nominee Stories

Citizens of Character- Elementary

Alex Jarrett –Whitchurch-Stouffville

Alex demonstrates excellent character through her fundraising efforts for cancer research, an orphanage in Haiti, and Sick Kids Hospital. In addition, she is a member of the Student Council where she helps to organize Spirit Days, the Food and Toy Drive, while also volunteering with the primary choir and the office.

Anne Frank Exhibit Student Ambassadors- Vaughan

The Anne Frank Exhibit Student Ambassadors demonstrate character through their work guiding hundreds of students through the *Anne Frank - A History for Today* exhibit. They promote inclusiveness by helping their peers reflect on the dangers of discrimination and the importance of tolerance, acceptance and human rights. They support learning from the past to create a more inclusive world today.

Edward Zhou -Markham

Edward consistently volunteers for all school assemblies while taking responsibility for putting together the presentations for our monthly Character Matters assemblies. He also demonstrates a positive attitude and courage during morning announcements. As part of the Tech team, Edward always makes sure to responsibly store the equipment.

Eunice Ho -Markham

Eunice is a member of our Student Parliament who put in a lot of effort and took the initiative in organizing our very successful Halloween Dance. She persevered through challenges that arose, all while maintaining a positive attitude throughout the entire day. With the support of other members of the Student Parliament, the dance was a tremendous accomplishment.

John Michael Symington -Markham

John Michael exemplifies inclusiveness and integrity, treating his peers and teachers in a way that makes them feel valued, respected and included. He recognizes the value in the ideas and opinions presented by others, and seek out contributions from everyone. John Michael makes choices that reflect his values at all times.



Julia Fu -Vaughan

Julia humbly leads by example and is kind and caring to everyone who crosses her path. She takes every opportunity to demonstrate her passion for making a difference and motivates others to be their best self. Julia has the confidence and drive to truly make a positive change, both in the school community and beyond.

Michael James - Markham

Mike has taken the initiative to organize and grow his annual fundraiser 'Mike's Love Lemonade' over the past six years. He has raised over \$15,000 for Markham Stouffville Hospital. Mike understands his responsibility to give back to his local hospital and continues to empower others in the community to do the same. As an active fundraiser, Mike truly demonstrates the power of philanthropy.

Noam Aufgang - Markham

Noam shows his compassion by putting his time and energy into projects that reduce poverty and heighten awareness of human rights. He strives to understand others and to offer what help he can, wherever he can, treating everyone with respect and dignity. Noam looks for opportunities to make a difference, and then makes the most of them.

Reflection Room Group - Vaughan

The Reflection Room Group has demonstrated Initiative, Responsibility and Inclusiveness by helping to create the Reflection Room at Ventura Park Public School. They've created a space where others in the school feel safe by providing them with the opportunity to reflect on their individual and/or group behaviour in the school.

Rosana Gao - Markham

Rosana always has a positive attitude coming to school and treats everyone with respect. She demonstrates compassion towards her peers and is a role model for younger students. Rosana treats others in a just, equitable and unbiased manner and is held in high regard, as she demonstrates all the character attributes.



Sabrina Xing -Markham

Sabrina displays a lot of initiative around the school and is a reading buddy for a student in Junior Kindergarten. She is a great leader and host for our monthly Character Matters assembly. Sabrina shows compassion towards others and has not been stopped by recent physical challenges. She continues to take part in school events, helping to organize many of them.

Citizens of Character-Secondary

Aidan Aird - Markham

Aidan has been a driving force behind the 360 Experience Young Leaders event, an overnight experience on the streets for high school students to support their understanding of the challenges facing homeless youth. He has helped recruit students from over 20 high schools across York Region raising over \$25,000 to date. Aidan treats others with respect, compassion and dignity, believing that everyone needs to contribute to our community to make society a better place for all.

Ashley Ngo -Markham

Ashley exhibits not only respect for individuals, but care, compassion and dignity for those who require the most help. In a recent co-op education placement supporting a Deaf and Blind Impairment class, she showed a willingness to learn, continually taking the initiative while collaborating with staff and truly making a difference.

Ben Levy - Markham

Ben passionately serves to maximize the health and well-being of individuals and communities alike. A model of character, he consistently demonstrates optimism, courage, respect and responsibility as he collaborates in developing social and economic capital within and beyond York Region. Ben invests in the growth of others through his leadership in school clubs, DECA Ontario, and Operation Med School Toronto.

Charandeep Gill - Vaughan

Charandeep demonstrates compassion, most notably in her completion of over 400 community service hours. While holding executive positions on five teams in her school, she successfully



persevered, completing schoolwork and volunteering. Charandeep makes everyone feel included and her altruistic personality contributes to her ability to get every job done.

Leandra Dickson – Richmond Hill

Leandra leaves everyone she comes in contact with feeling loved and special. She gives her complete attention to her peers and friends who need and seek out her help. Leandra sees us all as unique and deserving of celebration. She works exceptionally hard to overcome her own disability and to support all who are striving for their best as well.

Leanna Lui – Markham

Leanna seeks new learning opportunities and challenging undertakings as an active local community leader teaching and engaging in environmentally sustainable practises and social issues. She is an outstanding global citizen, having volunteered in rural China and Kenya. Leanna conducts herself with gratitude and integrity making positive meaningful impacts in her community.

Lily Edmunds – Newmarket

Lily demonstrates compassion for others by handing out stuffed animals as pet therapy companions. Soon, she recognized another need and sought to fill it. Feeling that some elderly people with Dementia and Alzheimer’s may not receive gifts during the holidays, Lily made sure to have stuffed animals available for them, hoping the residents would know they were in her thoughts.

Nazanin Soghrati – Richmond Hill

Nazanin inspires others to become better versions of themselves. She works with the Kids Help Phone National Youth Council to ensure that students’ mental health can be supported, and that there is a helpful system on which they can rely. Nazanin, along with a school club, have also raised funds needed to improve the conditions of a school in Ghana.

Nofar Waisenberg – Vaughan

Nofar demonstrates responsibility and compassion through her hard work, commitment and passion as an Anne Frank Exhibit ambassador. She is involved in a community-based project for Canada’s 150th and volunteers with elementary children. Nofar seeks to do her best and to always see the best in everyone.



Pranshu Doshi -Vaughan

Pranshu strives for a world that is inclusive and kind. He empowers others to take responsibility for creating the world in which they want to live. Pranshu is a champion for social justice and empowers those around him to become agents of change in order to positively impact their school, community and the world.

Robert Suwary – Richmond Hill

Robbie is an amazing example of persevering and living life to its fullest. Faced with unimaginable physical challenges, he comes to school every day with a positive attitude and a wonderful sense of humour. Robbie’s hard work and dedication serve as a role model to his school and community, as he is truly a determined and dignified champion.

Smit Parikh - Vaughan

Smit has a calm presence and confident nature that allow him to communicate effectively with his peers, younger students and school staff in both positive and challenging situations. He inspires us to learn more, do more and most significantly, to be kind and care more. Smit's high academic standing, dedication, very caring nature, and his leadership skills are exemplary.

Veronica Chan – Markham

Veronica demonstrated initiative in her Espresso-Self Project, intended to address mental health concerns within her community. In the face of overwhelming statistics, she was able to keep a positive outlook and helped facilitate conversations that provided support. Veronica persevered to make a difference for the 75 students that attended that night and her optimism helped ensure its success.

Citizen of Character- Young Adult

Azhar Khan - Vaughan

Azhar is an Environmental Engineer and scientist who plays a vital role regarding environmental protection. He has an ongoing commitment to the positive development of youth and their families. Azhar believes that we need to make sound decisions now in order to avoid limiting the choices of generations to come.



Fatma Saeed – Richmond Hill

Fatma is a highly self-motivated and compassionate individual, who has volunteered over 300 hours every year at the food bank. She is deeply passionate and devoted to creating awareness of social justice in the community and to mobilizing youth in York Region to care for those less privileged. Fatma strives to create an environment where everyone feels included and supported.

Jacquelyn Kendal – Vaughan

Jacquelyn’s courage to speak out about her difficult, personal journey is inspirational and provides an opportunity to hear a first-hand rendition of the effects of bullying. Her workshops focus on inclusivity, and emphasize the notion that everyone should be treated with respect, regardless of their differences. Through her volunteer speaking initiatives, she is changing how young children view bullying. Jacquelyn perseveres in this passion project for the sake of our children’s mental health and self-image.

Janson Chan – Richmond Hill

Janson was inspired by his brother to establish Autism Teenage Partnership, a youth-led and volunteer-run community-based program. Through his initiative, families and teenagers living with autism are met with compassion, understanding and respect. He has created an inclusive space for people who may have been previously overlooked.

Jaskiran Gill - Vaughan

Jaskiran works hard within the community impacting as many individuals as she can in a positive way. When creating her non-profit organization, Jaskiran persevered and her first *Crafts for Keeps* event was a huge success. She is an advocate for women's and girl's rights to education and she believes in a world without racism and prejudice.

Nancy Fok – Whitchurch- Stouffville

Nancy works to create an inclusive culture, one interaction at a time, bringing her positive attitude and welcoming smile to all she does. As a committed volunteer at Across U-hub for the past 4 years, Nancy faithfully leads the Promotion Team, providing a supportive environment, experiential learning opportunities, and work responsibilities in the area of marketing and promotions.



Parinaz Soghrati –Richmond Hill

Parinaz has patience, generosity, and compassion which never fail to inspire those around her and have helped to make her a prominent leader in the community. She has dedicated hundreds of hours volunteering at the hospital, as well as tutoring other students, ensuring that they truly grasp the content they're learning.

Riley Gladney-Hatcher – East Gwillimbury

Riley has dedicated her professional and personal life to helping her community. Her extensive volunteer work supports and enables people with serious illnesses to live in a more inclusive environment. Riley continues to prove she is an exceptional human being, who fulfills her commitments no matter what it takes.

Rivka Kagan - Vaughan

Rivka helps to create a safe and welcoming environment where everyone is caring and kind. She has an uncanny ability to know when someone is not feeling right and spends the time to find out how she can help. Rivka gives of herself willingly and helps others to see the best in themselves.

Yasmin Pathan - Markham

Yasmin has volunteered with Nadwa Project since 2010, playing a critical role as a youth mentor. She is an exemplary friend, educator and leader. She has worked tirelessly to educate the young generation. Yasmin is a dedicated professional woman who cares about women empowerment and rights and a leader who places a high priority on community service.

Citizens of Character- Adult

Anita Smeskal-Donato - Newmarket

Anita's perseverance shines through in the running of her two small businesses, while holding the position of President of the East Gwillimbury Chamber of Commerce, and more. She is known as a person you can turn to for advice or in time of need, as she will respond honestly, fairly, and with compassion.



Carla Whillier -Newmarket

Carla is not afraid to challenge social norms and change the context in which we think about mental health. An active member of the Mental Health Legal Committee, she has been able to break down barriers and create a community where everyone is valued, empowered and included. Since 2012, Carla has also been volunteering with the Life and Hope Foundation.

Charlene Biggerstaff - Georgina

Charlene is friendly, engaging, knowledgeable and always encouraging with a genuine caring soul. She actively volunteers in various capacities and believes in taking an active role to help others through building relationships. Charlene's Yoga skills support her volunteering as the warm up instructor, motivating thousands of Georgina Terry Fox Run Participants.

Connie Mason - Markham

Connie was part of a team of committed parents who developed the plan that saved our school and co-created a highly successful LEAP (learning enrichment afterschool program). She demonstrates compassion, leadership and respect with her involvement in an Out of the Cold Program that provides a welcoming overnight stay for homeless guests.

Danielle Magliaro – Vaughan

Danielle, as School Council Chair, has always understood that a crucial part of her role is to invite families to participate and engage in school life. She is always welcoming and inviting. Danielle is always aware of issues of accessibility and works to ensure all families are able to participate. She cares deeply about her community and those in it.

Dino Kotsikas –Newmarket

Dino is donating an outdoor ecosystem to the local Sports Complex and is also volunteering to create the garden, all while teaching local youth who will be working alongside him. Dino and his family embraced a refugee family of eight by introducing them to our local culture and holidays and most importantly, by offering employment to the hard working father.



Fiona Wood – East Gwillimbury

Fiona demonstrates integrity and optimism as an active volunteer with Girl Guides of Canada and leads with example as an educator with YRDSB and Scientists in the Schools. She develops exciting activities for youth and is a great role model in our community.

Heather-Anne Lambert MacKay – Aurora

Heather-Anne is a dedicated Doane House Hospice volunteer supporting people in making the end of life transition peaceful. She knows the importance of continuing education and has facilitated Contemplative End of Life Care workshops for active volunteers. Heather-Anne is compassionate, respectful and inclusive as she shares both her clients' tears and laughter.

Heather Hamilton - Aurora

Heather consistently demonstrates Inclusivity and Integrity daily; during her coaching practices and Special Olympic Bocce Tournaments. She ensures each team member participates, regardless of skill level, to ensure everyone feels part of the Team. She is a wonderful contributor to our Town.

Jen Metzner - Georgina

Jen is the owner and operator of Flip N Wicked, a gymnastics business in Georgina and when not there, she organizes a 10K Heroes Run for Huntington Disease in Toronto. Before the run, volunteers visit various Running Room locations to give a talk and educate the community about Huntington Disease.

Kerri Gallinger - Markham

Kerri is dedicated, hardworking and puts 100% into everything she does. She works countless hours to help raise money for SickKids and does it with all her heart and soul. No one is more deserving of being recognized for her commitment to this great cause.

Kimberly Dominguez – Vaughan

Kimberly works very hard to ensure all students can access the breakfast program and that we serve food that appeal to a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds. Now in our third year, we are serving close to 200 meals each morning. She not only arrives early every morning to prepare the food and serves it to our students, she also cares for them. Kimberley takes the



time to speak with them, check up on them and ensure the older students look after the younger ones.

Laurie Pangman-Carriere – Georgina

Laurie can be counted on to be there with a kind word or something more tangible, when a family is in crisis. Her volunteer work covers a range, notably Toonie Tuesday Events and in speaking on behalf of the Georgina Feral Cat Committee's TNR project. Even in the wake of her own personal issues Laurie is still out there working to make Georgina a better place.

Lois Henderson - Markham

Lois is a compassionate individual who helps those in need around her, whether she is in our school or parish community. She assists young children, parents and staff members in whatever tasks and needs arise. She truly exemplifies compassion and integrity in connecting those in need providing a kind ear, a warm heart and generous support.

Michael Carriere - Georgina

Mike works tirelessly as a Volunteer Member of The Georgina Terry Fox Run, Georgina Challenge, Hawkins Halloween Haunt For Hunger, Georgina Zombie Walk, to name a few. He is also frequently seen snow blowing neighbors' driveways, lending a hand where needed. Mike enjoys coaching softball, teaching youth about the importance of inclusiveness, team work, tolerance and respect.

Nancy Pearson - Georgina

Nancy is genuine, kind, compassionate, down to earth and hard working. When she isn't working at Zehrs, she is helping her family, friends & community. Nancy is well known for being a talented, contributing force to her daughter's business and they're both always ready to help out in the community to support those in need.

Norbert Koehl - Markham

Norbert has served as co-chair of the school council and was an important part of the team of parents who saved St. Anthony from closure. He co-founded our LEAP (learning enrichment afterschool program) and continues to work with volunteer parents who run this not-for-profit operation providing parents and children an outstanding option for after school care and opportunities.



Paul Botelho - Georgina

Paul is a genuinely good person who goes to great lengths to make sure his family, friends and those we serve at our classic car shows feel welcome, celebrated and respected. Each week he is committed to putting on a great show, raising money **for local charities**, allowing people to gather at a wonderful, free venue and celebrating our community.

Senay Temiz – Richmond Hill

Senay is a warm, friendly, dedicated individual who gives much of her time to supporting and volunteering in the school and school community. She is responsible for fundraising programs and organizes other volunteers to support the programs. She actively engages other parents, especially newcomers, making them feel both welcome and important.

Zem Zem Ajward – Richmond Hill

Zem Zem works hard on local initiatives by advocating for issues she believes are important. She is deeply passionate about social justice and is devoted to raising its awareness throughout the Region. Zem Zem is influential in her role with legal services in the area, while involved in leadership and engagement across the community.

Citizen of Character – Senior

Charlotte Smart – Newmarket

Charlotte has been a committed volunteer with Doane House Hospice for 18 years. She has been instrumental in the success of our Oasis Day Program and is also a dedicated in-home visiting volunteer. Each client who has the pleasure of visiting with Charlotte is offered a kind ear, a stable shoulder and a companion to make their day the best it can be.

Lorraine Hackenbrook - Georgina

Lorraine is a respected and admirable individual with a long history of volunteering and dedicating her time and efforts with wholehearted passion. Many have benefitted from her efforts, including the Georgina Terry Fox Run, Morning Glory Breakfast Club for Youth, Sutton Club 55, and Hospice Georgina, to name a few. Lorraine also serves on a number of boards and fundraising committees. She is true role model as well as a concerned, caring and active citizen.



Mary Belyea – East Gwillimbury

Mary has had a positive impact on so many young girls in her over 36 years of volunteer service with Girl Guides. She takes a leading role in demonstrating initiative, compassion and integrity across her work with Pathfinders. Mary continuously shares her respect for nature and wilderness and through this she is teaching her Pathfinders to equally respect their surroundings.

Roxanne Van Bynen – Newmarket

Roxanne exemplifies compassion, respect and perseverance. She volunteers at the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre, Southlake Hospital and the Newmarket Food Pantry. Roxanne's perseverance is evident in her desire to help organizations with their fundraising campaigns, from selling daffodils, pink ribbons, and poppies to supporting the Salvation Army Kettle Drive.

School of Character-YRDSB

Aldergrove Public School - Markham

Aldergrove administrators have done an excellent job partnering with School Council, Staff, Volunteers, and the broader community to create an inclusive and equitable learning culture where everyone feels safe, welcome and respected. Their Community Hub room is a caring environment established to support the needs families. Services include gently used clothing, access to high speed internet and a space to learn and share. Monthly chats focus on Social Justice, Community Resources, the Comprehensive Math Program, and more.

Newmarket High School – Newmarket

Newmarket High School stands as a courageous, compassionate advocate of fairness, respect and integrity. Their student-led actions create a model for others to follow. Staff character initiatives include frequent mental health check ins and class discussions, the creation of gratitude walls in classrooms and the recent Happiness Challenge taken up by staff to model good character.



Pleasantville Public School –Richmond Hill

Pleasantville consistently demonstrates inclusion and compassion. They hold an annual Holiday Heroes Drive to support those in need, and collect milk bags yearly to weave into blankets or mattresses for those less fortunate. Initiatives this year include making and selling Autism awareness buttons and hosting a spring garage sale to helping to send a child to camp.

Roy H. Crosby Public School - Markham

Roy H. Crosby has an inclusive team of staff, students, parents and caregivers that collaborate to foster a positive learning environment. Teachers and support staff meld traditional and modern learning approaches to cultivate attributes of responsibility, fairness, inclusiveness, teamwork and perseverance amongst the students and the community.

Stephen Lewis Secondary School – Vaughan

Stephen Lewis Secondary School deserves to be recognized for their efforts and results in instilling core values in our youth. The Faculty and Support Staff go above and beyond caring for and directing the students in a positive manner. They impart a sense of community, a sense of respect, integrity, honesty and compassion.

School of Character- YCDSB

St. Anthony CES - Markham

St. Anthony students are learning the lessons of environmental responsibility, initiative and compassion with an ongoing program to protect Monarch butterflies. In 2014, students created a butterfly garden on school grounds, which in turn planted the seeds of conservation and leadership.

St. Brigid CES – Whitchurch - Stouffville

St. Brigid is a model of inclusiveness, integrity, compassion and responsibility and this is demonstrated in a variety of ways. Reading Buddies, Social Groups, Community Programs, and fundraising all support the students and the larger community. The school uses honour roll certificates to acknowledge students who clearly demonstrate the learning skills necessary to



achieve. Several are also assigned as class monitors during lunch, peer mediators during recess, and helpers with special needs students, all of which demonstrate responsibility.

St. John XXIII CES - Markham

St. John XXIII is a vibrant community where engaged students, staff, families and parish work collaboratively to promote a safe and caring learning environment. Through its student-focused initiatives, St. John XXIII is a place of character where a sense of belonging, inclusiveness and initiative are celebrated.

School of Character- Independent

Holy Trinity School – Richmond Hill

Holy Trinity School encourages children to take initiative and create change. A student approached the principal about creating a fundraiser to help local children who didn't have winter coats. They presented the idea to the entire school during assembly, then worked with their peers and staff to organize a coat drive. Examples like this assist children in learning and demonstrating compassion, finding the courage to speak up, engage their peers, and take initiative, all of which allows them to take action to make a difference.

Pickering College - Newmarket

Pickering College emphasizes many character attributes. Specifically through this year's Philanthropy Challenge project, compassion for a range of social issues in our community was developed. This enhanced the overall character culture that Pickering College creates for its students. All were respectful to the organizations they researched and modeled responsibility and integrity by carefully examining organizations without prejudice or stigma.

Educator

Adriana Galloro – Richmond Hill

Adriana has had a tremendous impact on her students and in a very short period of time, has been able to open their minds, abilities, and horizons. She is always there for them, no matter



the circumstances. Adriana believes in taking their hands to show them the way to success. She has opened our minds and touched our hearts.

Darlene Bonneville - East Gwillimbury

Darlene has a gentle, caring spirit towards every child and she always takes the time to really listen to every child, whether it's a simple story, a hurt or a need. She makes each child feel important, valued and safe. The students and staff of Good Shepherd are so very fortunate to have such a kind and dedicated educator in our school.

Elise Levinson- Vaughan

Elise has demonstrated her compassion and dedication by working with our most vulnerable students. Her quiet dedication, respect and sense of responsibility have enriched the lives of many Anne Frank PS students. Elise's volunteer efforts include helping with programming, going on field trips, listening to students read, and working directly with them to support their learning.

Joanne Apter - Vaughan

Joanne is inclusive, shows great initiative, and she perseveres. She seeks to make all staff feel welcome and appreciated, and is always eager to greet both staff and students as she walks through the hallways. Joanne is often the 'ideas' person on our staff, always thinking of new and interesting ways to build our school community.

Krysten Cameron - Markham

Krysten is one of the most dedicated, hard-working, sincere, honest, reliable and positive individuals I have ever met. During her time at German Mills P.S. she has had a profound impact on the students, teachers, and parents and it is hard to put down in a few points. Because of Krysten, our teachers are happier and want to do more for their students. The students are also happier, feeling loved, appreciated and valued.

Lee-Ann Smalley - Newmarket

Lee-Ann has a track record of being extremely successful at addressing needs in the community with integrity and compassion. She is involved with a wide range and number of programs, such as the Portraits of Giving Committee and has been very pro-active with both ideas and support and always in an extremely polite and respectful manner toward all.



Linda d'Eon – Vaughan

Linda continuously demonstrates and promotes the character attributes by her commitment to the Luke 4:18 Social Justice Committee and by modeling respect, fairness, inclusivity and compassion for all of the students at Blessed Scalabrini. She encourages student, staff and family engagement and participation in social justice initiatives, assemblies, and liturgies, consistently demonstrating respect towards others.

Maria West – East Gwillimbury

Maria is a dedicated teacher who consistently goes above and beyond to ensure that the students have a rich, diverse program. She provides opportunities for each child to learn, grow, and play every day in the classroom, recognizing that each child is unique. Maria ensures that each child feels safe, valued and loved.

Mary Anderson – Newmarket

Mary spearheads the Luke 4:18 committee in the school and organizes fundraisers to assist local charities, such as the Knights of Columbus, local shelters and food banks. Her dedication to excellence and desire to make the world a better place make her a wonderfully approachable teacher who is loved by all of the students and staff at St. Nicholas.

Melene Popa - Newmarket

Melene demonstrates remarkable character and commitment to some of the most vulnerable mothers who have chosen to pursue their high school education in the face of adversity. She understands the challenging life circumstances that many of her students face, treating them with fairness, compassion and, above all, respect.

Nancy Fretter and Kelly Burns-Totten – Newmarket

Nancy and Kelly demonstrate compassion in all that they do. They empathically support many students who are facing academic and social or emotional challenges. Kelly and Nancy also demonstrate optimism with a positive and engaging manner with students, helping them to see opportunities that are still to be found.



Sabrina Ieraci - King

Sabrina is committed to ensuring that all students have enriched learning experiences regardless of their background, knowledge or skill level. King City Secondary School is fortunate to have on staff such a dedicated, energetic, and optimistic teacher. By focusing her efforts in building a positive school climate, she contributes to the school's welcoming and inclusive community.

Sahar Ghafouri –Markham

Sahar models and promotes equity and inclusiveness by fostering a warm, welcoming classroom community. She honors differentiated instruction for students with a range of learning styles, strengths, and needs, including accommodating and adapting lesson plans to suit multi-lingual learners. Sahar also takes responsibility to model positive interactions with students and colleagues.

Sheri Tanner - Newmarket

Sheri has co-ordinated and led a number of significant school-based initiatives including character education classrooms, staff professional development, relationship building and social inclusion activities. In addition, she is actively promoting and supporting the use of positive mental health strategies among staff and students alike.

Valentina Maniatis - King

Val is always compassionate, demonstrates integrity and remains optimistic, which can sometimes be a challenge when dealing with teenagers. Students and staff know that they can always count on Val to step up and fill a void to ensure that the job gets done or an opportunity is taken.

Vicky Agelopoulos - Markham

Vicky exemplifies what an educator can do to make a difference by engaging and empowering her colleagues and students to make character development an integral part of daily life. She works tirelessly on the school's leadership team, the Social Justice Club, Eco Club initiatives, Student council and worked as a PC4L lead (Positive Climate for Learning).



Character Community Collaboration

Jamie MacDonald – Aurora

Jamie supports Youth in Music in our community by providing artists with opportunities to showcase their talents throughout the year. Pop up performances happen throughout the year with his guidance and support. Youth in Music, in conjunction with the Arts Music Store, is also able to provide youth in need with a musical instrument or lessons.

Jason Scott- Aurora

Jason is the founder of the York North Basketball Association (YNBA) and is committed to the growth and development of youth basketball. He models acceptance, inclusion, empowerment, and commitment. Jason has volunteered up to 20 hours every week for almost 20 years, with YNBA supporting over 10,000 children across the region. In addition to his work with YNBA, Jason volunteers in a variety of capacities with local town councils and community programs.

Joanna Gribilas - Markham

Joanna is a wonderful, hardworking, and enthusiastic individual and it has been a pleasure meeting and working together on our School Council. She has recently put together a Fundraising Committee to raise money for a much needed and deserved playground at German Mills P.S. Joanna has inspired many of us to dedicate our time and energy to support the school.

Jonathan Stephan – Aurora

Jon stresses the importance of fairness and respect when instructing his students in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and reminds them that their efforts will be rewarded both on and off the mats. Being a good training partner is about learning together, helping your training partner be their best self, and becoming your best self in the process.

Love Project - Georgina

The Love Project encourages courage, inclusiveness and optimism. By encouraging their creative process, participants are able to work on their self-esteem. Small steps are taken at every interval to promote growth. Through each experience, they are supported in believing and focusing on their own personal journey.



Newmarket Nighthawks - Newmarket

The Newmarket Nighthawks organization demonstrates character through their support of hockey players with developmental challenges and their families. Their commitment to inclusiveness through programs for all abilities supports individuals in gaining skills and confidence. This organization is led by Bob and Kim MacKenzie, Mike and Debbie Young, with optimism and perseverance.

Sean McDermott - Markham

Sean is an amazing individual who is always willing to help with any event, activity, team or committee. He embodies the character attributes of compassion, inclusiveness and respect. Sean maintains a positive attitude and outlook, showing respect in all situations, with a collaborative style and approach that is needed in every school community.

S.H.A.R.P. - Markham

S.H.A.R.P. (Students Honing Abilities and Recognizing their Potential) is an after-school program developed by Across U-hub, focusing on self-discovery, peer relationship and leadership development for high school students of East Asian immigrant descent. Students explore different multi-media activities including experiential learning, reflection and introspection, mentorship, community-based outreach activities, cultural exploration and volunteer training.

Character Community Colleague

Anthony Torresan (Badge # 651) – Aurora

Anthony has worked in various roles within the York Regional Police and in each he has brought an infectious optimism and perseverance that encourages even those 'set-in-their ways' to try something new. With the officers who are already motivated and full of 'out-of-the-box' ideas, Anthony provides fair and honest feedback to make sure their initiatives succeed. He has the ability to keep staff motivated and convert every challenge into a teaching moment, all the while sharing in their successes, yet taking responsibility when things fall short.



Catherine May - Aurora

Cathy is a Child & Youth Worker who always shows compassion, perseverance, empathy and fairness in her dealings with students and peers. She has had an amazing impact on our students at Rick Hansen. Cathy's career has been built on helping and caring for those who find themselves lost or at odds with day to day trials.

Joanne Dixon - Vaughan

Joanne is a caring individual who is sensitive to the needs of her students in the Language Centre. She creates a safe and loving classroom environment that is conducive to learning and responds to the various learning styles of her students. Joanne provides an environment of inclusivity where every student's' opinions and contributions are valued and acknowledged.

Lori Woodyatt –East Gwillimbury

Lori welcomes everyone's contribution and the more people participating in the tourism project, the better. It was her initiative that started a tourism committee and created the Thanksgiving Tour with plans to see it grow bigger and better. Lori seeks to achieve goals, whether for help, funding or the creation of an event, that result in positive outcomes.

Louise Procter Maio – Richmond Hill

Louise, as CEO of the Richmond Hill Public Library, sponsored a broad and inclusive process of defining and implementing library values that included the Character Attributes. By including the Library Board of Directors and all staff in this process, she ensured everyone was working together toward a common goal.

Palma Pallante – Vaughan

Palma always sees the silver lining and is ever optimistic when someone from the community, client or colleague comes to her with anything. Her contributions in both her professional and volunteer positions are significant. Palma brings a naturally positive demeanor to all she undertakes and is always ready to assist with compassion and a smile.

Todd & Cheryl Telford -Georgina

Todd and Cheryl are all about community support and involvement. They are extremely proud to employ hundreds of students from Georgina and reward an annual Scholarship to one of



them who go on to attend College or University. Quarterly, they publish their McDonald's Employee of the Month as an appreciation and recognition of their hard work and dedication.

Character Community Leader

Amanda Knegje – Richmond Hill

Amanda volunteers considerable time with PFLAG to provide education and support to the LGBTQ community within York Region. She is there for individuals or their family members with support, guidance and understanding. Amanda seeks to build partnerships with other organizations to make York Region a more inclusive place to live and work.

Denise Martin – East Gwillimbury

Denise is a dedicated leader supporting an enormous range of diverse families across the Region with her positive guidance, encouragement and kindness. From helping them to understand their role as new parents in prenatal classes, to encouraging and supporting mothers in their roles as nurturers, and to reaching out to marginalized populations, Denise continually establishes a positive, caring environment for all.

Di Solitar - Georgina

Di demonstrates tremendous character by volunteering in so many ways. She organizes online auctions for a variety of causes, helps others with food pantry collections, assists with BP celebrity server dinners, gathers purses and hotel samples for women in shelters, collects clothing for the homeless, and volunteers at the Georgina Cares Live Auction.

Dominic Lee – Vaughan

Dominic sought to promote the well-being of seniors, and together with friends eight years ago, built a successful seniors club. Today there are over 300 seniors in 3 centers across Vaughan. Through his leadership, they are inclusive and welcoming, offering diversified recreational and healthy activities, and helping to improve physical and intellectual well-being.



Garry and Sarah Glidden - Aurora

Garry is a true inspiration and a great example for his daughter. He truly cares about his community and wanted to make a positive change. He took the initiative in supporting the Neighbourhood Network Holiday Gift Drive and with his daughter Sarah, works tirelessly with to make sure other families have an enjoyable Christmas.

Gary Semeniuk - Georgina

Gary believes in doing what is right with honesty and following through with what he says he will do. He strived to see the ONES show become a success and it has. All the events he organizes show how much Gary loves Georgina and wants to give back to the community.

Gina Semeniuk – Georgina

Gina embodies every one of the attributes as a great mother, businesswoman and leader in the community. She makes time for all and has supported a number of events that give back to the Georgina community. Gina is driven to be present every minute of her life and always takes time to balance life, living it to the fullest.

Hand over Hand – Markham

Hand over Hand is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting teenagers and young adults with developmental disabilities and their families. Formed by a group of compassionate Unionville high school students, it endeavours to fill the need for peer-driven, respectful, and affordable social and recreational programs for youth with special needs.

Joanna Chee Kwan Kwok - Vaughan

Joanna believes that lives can be changed when youth can open up and share in a group setting. As a committed Game Design leader at Across U-hub, she diligently works to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and interdependence, regardless of cultural backgrounds or abilities.

Kevin Kennedy – Newmarket

Kevin eagerly assumed the role of lead liaison with Ms. Mikkelsen, our Green Team Teacher and the various companies supporting the ‘greening’ of the school. He put in many hours to assist



with this project ensuring our playground was more eco-friendly, as well as visually pleasurable. Kevin is also a valued member of St. Nicholas Catholic School Council.

Laura Daly – Whitchurch - Stouffville

Laura and her brother, Ryan, began GetRecD Events fourteen years ago, hosting a fun community get-together that raised funds for the Make a Wish Foundation. To date \$420,000 had been donated. She and her team reach out to people in a time of need, listening to their personal stories, and spend evenings and weekends visiting cancer patients and their families. Laura has a way of making everyone feel that they are important and commits to this work with great compassion and optimism.

Mattia Trinier - Markham

Mattia is an exceptional individual who is very supportive of her school community. She stands up for what is right and just, faces challenges with courage and fairness. She is a hard worker, a dedicated educator and a great support to so many individuals.

Michel Bergeron – Richmond Hill

Michel is an incredible leader, who inspires everyone who knows him. His compassion and love for the children, the staff and the school is unique. Michel is always innovating and trying to make our school a better place of learning. He is fair and honest, treating everyone with great respect and integrity.

Michelle Risi- Anagnostopoulos – King

Michelle embodies the spirit of community and giving. Whether volunteering at the Soroptimist “Living Your Dream” award, advocating for higher learning for Holy Trinity School, leading through her involvement on the board at the PKD Foundation of Canada, or leveraging her professional role in the community to bring awareness to community needs and solutions, Michelle demonstrates inspiring character.

Neila Poscente - Newmarket

Neila builds on the trust and respect of the Southlake Foundation, making donors feel confident in supporting the hospital. She is courageous in her beliefs and also in the face of challenges. Neila never saw a campaign as something to be feared and instead used these opportunities to teach optimism and perseverance to her team, all the while remaining unwaveringly loyal.



Norma Trivino – Richmond Hill

Norma demonstrates compassion in her community by doing whatever is necessary to help others. Whether buying groceries for a struggling family in her neighbourhood or writing a letter to a restaurant chain head office asking them to consider bringing a much needed program to Canada (Sensory Sensitive Sundays for children with Autism), Norma stands up for her community.

Roxanne Van Bynen – Newmarket

Roxanne continuously supports, encourages, counsels and brings hope and smiles to people who find themselves in a less fortunate position. She is a founding committee member of the Lunch at My Place program at Trinity United Church, where volunteers prepare and serve a weekly fellowship meal for the community without payment, judgement or questions.

Sandi O’Neill – Newmarket

Sandi is sensitive to the varying needs of our community and mobilizes teams within four schools to provide a holiday season, free of judgment and regardless of circumstances. She embodies respect by ensuring that the campaign is a dignified opportunity for families to provide appropriately for their loved ones.

Vince’s Market - Newmarket

Vince’s Market believes that for businesses to be strong, communities must be strong. They commit an annual budget of \$45,000 to be put back into the community and they have supported charitable, sports and arts organizations, most notably Southlake Regional Health Centre and the Town of Newmarket.

Character Community Innovator

Bob Bak – Vaughan

Bob is a Pioneer of International Languages (formerly known as Heritage Languages) implementation, in association with York Region District School Board. His initiative, integrity and perseverance over the years resulted in the heritage language programs widely available to us today. He applied, appealed and worked for years so that our children could have this



privilege. He retired from the workforce 16 years ago but has a strong presence in our community and generously gives of his time through many organizations.

Chole Vargas - Aurora

Chole works to build a community where everyone feels included, empowered and valued for his or her unique contributions. He has a diverse group of people working with him to put together the magazine 'Hola York Region' and in September 2016, Chole successfully launched his first issue.

Country Day School - King

Country Day School staff, students, and parents came together to support their community with a very successful Holiday Gift Drive. It was a great example of compassion and generosity, as well, as teamwork and inclusivity. They chose not to select just one charity and a single donation, but to help as many as possible, determined by each classroom.

Deborah McMillan – Richmond Hill

Deborah, with a great deal of initiative and courage on her part, started from the ground up as a new entrepreneur. Since founding *Knowledge Makes Cents*, Deborah has undoubtedly experienced failures and challenges but she never gives up. She is always optimistic and persistent in building a company that will positively benefit society.

Disha Nayak - Markham

Disha introduced the ME to WE (Free the Children campaign) framework to the Bill Crothers Secondary School community, and is also responsible for a computer science club and Youth Technology Summit. In addition, Disha speaks out as a Youth Councillor for the City of Toronto. Her impact as a student is immeasurable as she continues to selflessly help our diverse community.

Eva Konjic-McDowell - Georgina

Eva took the initiative to establish a (TNR) Trap, Neuter, Return Program called the Georgina Feral Cat Committee and brought together a dedicated, knowledgeable group of compassionate volunteers whose goal is to educate and advocate. The group is having a



tremendous impact in rescuing numerous feral cats and kittens, while helping meet our community's needs.

Gary & Gina Semeniuk - Georgina

Gary & Gina initiated the June Community Garage Sale to raise funds for Jericho Youth program and they also sponsor The ONES Car Show, with free admission. A draw is held to allow participants a chance to win a portion while also helping a charity of their choice. They also hold an annual pie giveaway where 200 pies have been given out to the community.

GIVE (Get Involved, Volunteer in Education) - Vaughan

The nominees of GIVE have designed a program that enhances parent engagement in school communities that is inclusive and supports student achievement and wellbeing. The members offer training sessions that include: Volunteerism, Equitable and Inclusive Education, Human Rights, Mental Health, Immigrant Experience, Workplace Safety. Sessions support newcomers with enhancing their skills and beneficial Canadian experience.

Glenn Dickson - Georgina

Glenn is committed to community involvement. On select weeks, when Sutton Giant Tiger doesn't distribute a flyer, he donates the ad savings to local charities. *Giant Tiger Gives Back* has an impressive list of charities who have benefitted from this initiative and Glenn's generous spirit.

Laurie Brakeboer - Newmarket

Laurie has demonstrated compassion, initiative, perseverance, optimism and responsibility in building a core volunteer administrative team as well as the 100 Women Who Care - Central York Region chapter. The group has donated approximately \$45,000, in six meetings, to local charities as of January 2017.

Lynda Quirino - Georgina

Lynda took the initiative to courageously create the Georgina Paranormal Society based on a foundation of integrity, honesty and compassion for people and their experiences. She supports inclusiveness and respect for all in a welcoming, optimistic and nonjudgmental environment where individuals are able to share their experiences.



Ron Weese – Aurora

Ron works tirelessly to ensure that Aurora is represented in the area of sport and a testament to his perseverance can be found in the establishment of the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame. With Ron's ongoing determination, Activate Aurora was officially launched in September 2016, with one goal - to make Aurora the most Active Community across Canada. Ron has assembled a team of community stakeholders and, with their help, will reach our entire community, challenging them to become more active, while enjoying the benefits to their overall health.

Sandra Payne – Cuddler Baby Program – Newmarket

Sandra is a Paediatric NICU Nurse Educator at Southlake and the lead behind the Cuddler Program at Southlake. She helped recruit highly-trained volunteers who are available daily to cuddle babies when their parents are unable to provide them the hug they need. Sandra's goal is to raise awareness about the benefits and powers of touch.

Vikkie Chen – Markham

Vikkie has a passion for the environment, her community, and a dedication to the youth she serves. As a dedicated leader in Across U-hub's Tic-Tac-Toronto team (creating innovative events to raise environmental awareness and socially compassionate attitudes and actions among East-Asian youth), she consistently employs creative thinking, a strong work ethic, and a sense of responsibility.