



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Citizens of Character - Elementary

Lily Edmunds - Newmarket

Lily Edmunds is 11 and in Grade 6 at Notre Dame Catholic Elementary School. She spends most weekends running 5K races for charity. Lily has participated in over 14 local 5K runs and raised over \$600 between July and December 2013.

When she isn't racing her heart out for those in need, she is a contributor to the National Post in the Each Coach section dishing out advice to runners who ask.

Lily has been doing very well in the racing circuit. She placed second overall at the Niagara Falls International Marathon 2K run and brought home a trophy. She placed second over 270 adults and a small hand full of teens at the recent Newmarket Santa Shuffle and came home with a gold medal as she was the first female to cross the line.

Her younger brother William is her greatest fan and not only cheers her on but has also been inspired to begin to run as well.

She has dreams of making it to the Olympics one day and raising as much money for charity as she can along the way.

When she is at school, she spends most of her free time working and playing with the children from the special needs class. She is constantly thinking of others, and how she can do more to make others happy just like her.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Citizens of Character – Secondary

Brennan Wong - Richmond Hill

Brennan has completed over 2,600 volunteer hours serving local and international communities; and raised over \$75,000 to help young people, seniors, families and the disadvantaged.

He believes in the potential of young people to become leaders of tomorrow, and hopes to inspire other youth to support their communities. In Grade 11 at Richmond Hill High School, Brennan believes in the spirit of “helping youth help others” and has launched several projects to lead by example. “Strength in Numbers” is a social activism program to support projects in developing countries. “Travel for Hope Fund” is an annual grant program that awards assistance of \$500 to ten youth who want to volunteer abroad. “Pledges of Change” is a youth run NFP that inspires people to offer one suggestion in support of a local or global issue, and act upon it in the future. One dollar is then donated to a featured charity.

Brennan volunteering includes time as a leader, ambassador, fundraiser and mentor for Free the Children, Me to We, Town of Richmond Hill, Sunnybrooke, St. John’s Hospital, Richmond Hill Food Bank to name a few. He has also organized the Town of Richmond Hill’s “Future Leaders in YAction” Leadership Conference for the past two years to share his experiences and ignite student’s passion in extra-curricular and community activities

Brennan’s commitment to his causes and resourcefulness and problem solving has set him apart as someone who believes in youth empowerment to create positive changes in his community.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Citizens of Character – Young Adult

Shawn Avery – Georgina

Shawn is a wonderful person to be around. He is optimistic, willing to learn and supports others whenever he can. He is a true example of courage and has a good sense of who he is which makes him a great role model for others who face similar circumstances.

Shawn is an active member of YOUTHSPEAK Performance by sharing his personal story of bullying and living with Asperger's. He speaks honestly about his experiences during elementary and high school and gives a message to students about asking for help.

Shawn volunteers at New Leaf residential centre working with dual-diagnosed adults, has volunteered with a youth group at the YMCA and acts as an Eco-mentor which involves speaking to grades 3-5 about being eco-friendly. He also participated in a program they ran at the Sandgate shelter.

As a YOUTHSPEAK presenter, he takes the initiative to attend events in the community and share his experiences working with them and spreads awareness of the work they do.

He encourages students to include others and accept differences and shows compassion to those who seek him out at his presentations.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Citizens of Character – Adult

Elizabeth Leung - Markham

Elizabeth has been a committed member of the Donald Cousens Public School community since it opened in 2008. For the past 12+ years, she has volunteered on a daily basis from 8am-1pm and supports the school library, attends school events, provides transportation support and knows nearly every child in the school by name.

Elizabeth treats her role as a volunteer as a job and she ensures her tasks are well done and cares about the space and the people she interacts with.

She acts as a translator when needed and students often come to her to get clarification when learning new things.

She is a positive and compassionate person who will go out of her way to share information about community events, cook wonderful dishes for staff luncheons, and bring her own (adult) children in to share their skills and talents with the school.

Elizabeth is also actively involved in the local community and supports a variety of Markham initiatives and events.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Citizens of Character - Senior

Margaret McCleary – Thornhill

Margaret has one of the biggest hearts of anyone I know and shares her generosity with youth, adults and seniors alike. She demonstrates compassion, initiative and fairness to all the while coping with severe arthritis that has her using a walker and canes to get around.

Since retiring as a Children's Aid Care worker for over 29 years, Marg's passion to help others is next to none. One of her favorite ways to help others is through her gardening. She volunteers at three garden plots to grow vegetables for seniors on fixed incomes through "Seeds for Change". She also plants vegetables at Thornhill United Church and delivers produce to local needy residents and is known as "The Veggie Lady". As well she encourages and assists seniors to grow "Planter Gardens" on their balconies.

At Christmas time, Marg creates treat bags for stockings, buys gifts for low income and single parent families including wrapping paper and gift cards so the parents can make these gifts their own.

She volunteers twice a month with the Dog Drill team and helps to take a variety of dogs to senior's homes to entertain them.

Her volunteering and commitment to the community is shown in the variety of NFP that she helps –The Salvation Army recruited her to oversee their Back to School Book Bag program, she worked with the Welcome Centre in Newmarket to help newcomers with their first Christmas in Canada, she "gleaned" produce from the Round the Bend Farm and donated the results to the Inn from the Cold program and she prepared Easter Baskets for the Blue Door Shelter Family and Teen Centre.

Her largeness for the York Region community knows no bounds!



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

School of Character – York Region District School Board

James Robinson Public School - Markham

It truly takes a staff of committed, dedicated and empathetic individuals to form a team of excellence and strong character. It is a small school with a BIG heart with unbelievable energy and passion.

JRPS embraces exceptionalities and works together to create a welcoming, safe and engaging learning environment for all.

The teachers and staff at James Robinson Public School go above and beyond all expectations to support student's wellbeing. The teachers at this school teach and respond to the students with compassion, dedication and respect. Students are honoured for having a voice and are expected to step up to the Character Traits the school advocates.

The staff has worked hard to create a fully accessible outdoor classroom, 180 meters of accessible learning trail, a fully accessible outdoor stage, shade garden, food and sensory gardens.

They created a one of a kind Satellite Summer Program the Reverse Integrated Multi-Exceptionalities Site (RIMES). The program was geared for students with Developmental Delays and complex needs with elements of integration for able-bodied students who require more support in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

To bring together such a huge project took tremendous amount of personal time, dedication, courage, responsibility and perseverance.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

School of Character – York Catholic District School Board

Our Lady of Good Counsel - Sharon

The school is the backbone of the community. Its people are compassionate and courageous, honest and fair and the school provides great optimism through its numerous initiatives to help not only the students, but families in the school, and in the world. It is a school of character and character building, creating a culture of inclusion, respect, persistence and innovation.

The school brings hope, serves well and celebrates the virtues of the Catholic Faith in all its initiatives.

This school's Anti Bullying Initiatives focus on making respect a high priority in areas such as proper play, mentoring older students with younger ones and involving students in supporting kindergartens, yearbook, recycling, and the incorporation of team play during free time.

This school is involved in many community initiatives such as the Terry Fox Run, Childhood Cancer Canada, Wigs for Kids to building schools in Kenya.

The school has adopted self-regulation as a focused approach in order to teach students how to be better decision makers, and to take greater responsibility for their actions.

Students are encouraged to act with fairness and in honest ways. They are reminded to be courageous and stand up for what they know is right and be the voice for the voiceless.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Educator of Character

Kathleen Rodgers, Terry Romanelli and Suzanne Jovic - Vaughan

Kathleen, Terry and Suzanne are amazing teachers who for several years have dedicated their lunches, recess and after school time to mentor and lead a large group of students in leadership and altruistic opportunities.

This club promotes thinking about others and using student voice to make the world a better place and identifies ways to give back and bolster student self-confidence. They have encouraged and supported students in leadership roles as they educate themselves and others on local, national and global issues.

Under their leadership various events have been spearheaded. These included adopting a child through World Vision, preparing school kits and raising funds for medical products to send to Haiti, organizing bake sales for Uganda's Nightwalkers and to benefit victims of sexual abuse in India.

Each year they hold food, book and handcrafted item drives to support a variety of charitable initiatives including the We Stand Together-a Me To We initiative supporting the Aboriginal People in Canada and women's shelters.

All of these activities helped raise awareness for the students of Maple Creek PS and gave them opportunities to see how they could help others from all over the world.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Character Through the Arts

Love of Dance Committee - Aurora

These teachers volunteer their time and expertise every year to run a group dance showcase for students.

The group dance teams must create a dance that demonstrates one character attribute. So beside the dance group (must have a least 12 students) creating a dance they are also discussing and demonstrating character attributes.

What began in 2009 with 155 students taking part has grown to a two day event of over 400 students.

The committee encourages student inclusiveness by encouraging both boys and girls to participate. Two students tell how they choose their attribute and how they learn to work together to pick the music and create the dance itself.

The committee has worked hard to keep this event going each year, to inspire students to keep dancing through sharing their own personal stories and providing feedback to the coaches and students.

They have also created the Virtue Award that is given at the end of each day to the team that demonstrates good character during their warm-up and performance.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Character Through Sports

Philip Horsman - Aurora

Phil Horsman served children and teachers in York Region faithfully for over thirty years as a teacher.

Now a ten year retiree, Phil services as Chair of the York Region Elementary Athletic Association (YREAA). In this capacity he oversees all teams and tournaments for sanctioned sports run by YRDSB staff.

He has also coordinated the York Region Jump Rope for Heart programs for over 15 years, bringing enthusiasm and skill to children and adults alike.

Under Phil's direction and guidance the schools in York Region District School Board raised over 1 million dollars to aid the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Phil's enthusiasm is best demonstrated as the organizer of the York Region District School Boards annual Special needs Track and Field Meet. This event provided an opportunity for students with autism, physical and developmental and mild intellectual disabilities to demonstrate their athletic abilities, and to experience competition in a supportive environment.

Phil truly believes that the respect and learning that young people can gain from their involvement in sports are character traits that will carry and support them throughout their lives as they become caring and compassionate citizens in our community.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Business Person of Character

Dr. Judith Ann Ancheta – Markham

Dr. Ancheta is a kind and compassionate caregiver. She deeply cares about her patients and takes the time to understand their needs. She has a very positive attitude - always smiling and cheerful. She is also very involved in the community volunteering her time, energy and resources.

As a naturopathic doctor, she is both enthusiastic and passionate. Dr. Ancheta strives to motivate, inspire and educate her patients and the community to achieve optimal health.

She believes in connecting with her community and most of all she truly cares about her patient's health, wellbeing and care.

Dr. Ancheta loves her profession and demonstrates attributes that contribute to a healthier York Region, one patient at a time. Integrating ancient wisdom with modern medicine, she embodies a true physician, providing humanistic care. Through community involvement, she strives to increase access to naturopathic care, a pillar of her practice.

Dr. Ancheta embodies the best qualities of not only a healthcare professional but that of a kind caring and compassionate individual. She strongly advocates for the wellbeing of her patients, empowering them to achieve their best quality of life.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Organization of Character - Profit

On the Floor - Markham

On The Floor is a newly formed company and its owners Mitchell Jackson and Lisa Hupe have made it their goal to make sure that they do as much as they can to give back.

Every new business has its up and down during the startup process but it hasn't kept them from this focus.

In every event they plan they try to recognize the ways they can incorporate giving back.

In their first year alone they managed to gross over \$30,000 for SickKids.

They share their passion for dance with all the patients by doing autograph days and by creating an annual On the Floor Teen Dance party. Patients get to take part and get up and dance. The party includes a photo booth, black light graffiti wall, a resident SickKids DJ and food.

As well they take part in the SickKids Summer Prom.

The have also created a dance-a-thon for studios and dancers across Ontario to take part in with the proceeds again going to SickKids.

On the Floor brings professional dancer experiences to the competitive dancer and gives them a chance to win a spotlight performance at their A Night for SickKids Gala.

It is amazing to see the dedication they have and how they have adapted the business they love to give back and to help make a difference.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Organization of Character - Not for Profit or Service Organization

YMCA – York Region Employment and Community Services - Richmond Hill

This organization works with all the core values daily that the Character Community promotes. Compassion, optimism and courage were demonstrated while coping with two of their beloved colleagues being diagnosed with cancer.

When the staff learned that two colleagues were facing cancer challenges, they rallied around and collected money for medicine and for transportation costs to and from the hospital.

They made food and ensured healthy groceries were available, and maintained daily contact with both ladies by email, text and in person.

They maintained a positive attitude and helped to buoy the spirits of the two going through treatments as well as looking after each other.

When one of these colleagues passed away in late September they collected donations to help with the funeral costs and at Christmas time delivered gifts to her three children.

When the other colleague returned to work she expressed how grateful she was for their positive thoughts and energy as well as their ongoing care.

Today, the staff is grateful for their cherished memories of the one and that they still get to work with the other each and every day.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Community Hero

Colten and Luke Rybuck – Richmond Hill

Two teenage brothers, who were out late to buy the new Grand Theft Auto video game, helped save the life of an elderly man from an Oak Ridge's house fire on September 17, 2013.

On their way home Colten and Luke Rybuck heard a fire alarm at a house on Lake Avenue, near Yonge Street and King Street.

After approaching the front door, Colten called 911; while Luke kicked open the door. Inside, he was forced back three times by thick, black smoke. "I kicked it in and kept going back and forth in the house, but there was too much smoke," he said.

When fire crews arrived just after 1 a.m., they rescued the 70-year-old, who was taken to hospital, where he was treated for smoke inhalation.

Richmond Hill Fire Chief Steve Kraft later told the media how pleased he was to hear that two citizens stepped in to help out a fellow resident.

"I think it's amazing," he said. "While we never want people to get injured - our natural instinct is to assist somebody. They did what they could and then they realized it was too dangerous and they didn't go any further."

The two boys were also taken to hospital with minor smoke inhalation.

Both boys attend Cardinal Carter CSS in Aurora.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Change our World – Environmental

Dale McCleave - Vaughan

For the last 4 years, Dale has spearheaded the Maple Lions Club E-waste program throughout York Region, to ensure the safe and proper disposal of electronic waste, and to promote reuse and refurbishment of working equipment that will be donated to families with need.

Dale constantly approaches businesses to offer to take their old computers and to promote the reuse of good equipment and truly believes that responsible E-waste disposal is vital.

Dale promotes public E-waste awareness events in Markham and Vaughan to encourage the public to dispose of their E-waste responsibly, and to raise funds for the Maple Lions Club.

He is also a leader in organizing community events such as Maple Pancake Fest in April and Maplefest in August.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Change our World – Community

Melinda Garel – Keswick

Melinda demonstrates a selfless life giving and doing for others in whatever capacity she can in the school community, local community and global community.

Melinda volunteers her time through the week to local churches and non-profit organizations and provides meals, clothing and financial assistance to the needy. When she hears of families in need, she immediately comes to the aid with her time, her money and meeting any needs that she can. She recognizes what needs to be done and finds a way to go and get the job done and never sits back to wait for others to do something,

She is training to become a minister to the sick to reach out to the elderly in nursing homes and residencies. She is also travelling on a mission trip to Guatemala with “Water Ambassadors” to dig wells and provide food and clothing to the poverty stricken.

Melinda is also a dedicated Phys. Ed. Elementary Teacher, who exemplifies exceptional character traits and is an inspiring role model for everyone she comes in contact with. Melinda teaches students how to play fair and honestly, teaching them with integrity and to include all members of the class both in the gym and outside on the playground.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Character Champion

Bill Fisch - Newmarket

Bill Fisch is currently serving his fifth consecutive term as Chairman and CEO of The Regional Municipality of York (1997 to present).

Chairman Fisch is a results-oriented leader with a proven track record of bringing people and organizations together to address important community needs. He is well-known and well-regarded for his vast political experience and his uncanny ability to give all opinions equal consideration. While increasing service delivery levels, Chairman Fisch continues to enhance the Region's position as one of the best places in Ontario to live, work, play and visit.

Chairman Fisch has served as a Board member for a number of organizations, including York Regional Police Services Board, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, York Central Hospital, Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance, Metrolinx, GO Transit Board and has been the Chair and CEO of the Rapid Transit Board since 2002.

He is one of the founding members of the Character Community Foundation of York Region and has been a stalwart supporter and champion for our work.

As a leader in the community, he has been Chair of the York Region United Way Building Industry Luncheon on a number of occasions and hosted the 2009 Chairman Dinner for the Arts to showcase and raise funds for new artists.

Character Champion (continued)



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Bill Fisch - Newmarket

Chairman Fisch has also supported a wide array of charities, including the Children's Safety Village of York Region, Ontario Special Olympics and York Region Abuse Program. In 2013, Chairman Fisch was the Co-Chair of the Special Olympics Ontario Summer Games hosted in York Region.

A graduate of Queen's University with a Bachelor of Commerce, Chairman Fisch also holds a Juris Doctor (JD) degree from Osgoode Hall Law School and was a practising lawyer in Thornhill, Ontario for 21 years. Bill Fisch began his political career in 1988 as a Councillor for the Town of Markham and was elected as a Regional Councillor for the Town of Markham in 1994.

Married since 1971 to his wife Tova, Chairman Fisch is the proud father of two children and grandfather of three grandchildren.



2014 Character Awards Winners Stories

Donald Cousens Award

Susan Boyne-Bird - Neighbourhood Network Ambassador - EG

Background: Retired Principal for York Region District School Board.

Causes I Care About:

- Southlake Regional Health Centre
- Easter Seals
- Educational support

Quote: "I believe in volunteering for all ages, reasons and seasons."

Tim Jones - Neighbourhood Network Ambassador - Aurora

Background: Former town councilor and Mayor of Aurora.

Causes I Care About:

- York Region Character Community Council (Founding Co-Chair)
- CHATS- Community & Home Assistance to Seniors
- York Region Food Network

Quote: "Volunteering is one of the best ways to serve your community and benefit yourself in the process."

Tom Taylor – Neighbourhood Network Ambassador - Newmarket

Background: Former town councilor and Mayor of Newmarket.

Causes I Care About:

- INN From the Cold Homeless Shelter (Founding Member & Treasurer)
- York Region Habitat for Humanity (Founding Director & President)
- Newmarket-Aurora District Association for Community Living (Director & longtime supporter)