

City honours volunteers

AEDAN HELMER, OTTAWA SUN

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Citizen of the Year Awards were presented Thursday to LaDorna Penteluk (Senior), Megan Ellwood (Youth), Clarence Maheral (Senior) and Dr. Nalin Bhargava (Adult). AEDAN HELMER/OTTAWA SUN

Last week, Ottawa was named the country's most liveable city, and on Thursday, hundreds of local volunteers were honoured for their part in making Ottawa "the best city to live, to work, to play," said Mayor Larry O'Brien.

O'Brien called the ninth annual civic appreciation awards the "best ever," recognizing volunteers who donate their skills, expertise and their time to their community.

O'Brien said 54% of Ottawa residents - about 4% higher than the national average - serve as volunteers, "offering themselves as examples of commitment and passion in the city."

Four people, one youth, one adult and two seniors, shared Citizen of the Year honours in a ceremony and reception at City Hall, while dozens of nominees and individual winners were applauded in Council chambers.

Dr. Nalin Bhargava was recognized for his service with a handful of charities, including the Ottawa Heart Institute Telethon, the Canadian Cancer Society, United Way, and as a key organizer of the annual Maharaja's Ball.

Megan Ellwood was recognized in the youth category as a "wonderful example of a truly dedicated volunteer," working with special needs children since the age of 11.

"She has a kind heart and has everyone else's best interests in mind," said O'Brien.

Clarence Maheral was recognized in the senior category for his decades of dedicated service to the Glen Cairn community, serving as president of the Glen Cairn Community Association and offering his time to dozens of local causes.

From organizing local youth sports to helping form the Kanata Chamber of Commerce, "it would be a difficult task to try to identify a group that has not benefited from his genuine caring for people in need of a helping hand," said O'Brien.

LaDorna Penteluk shared the senior award for her 50 years as a foster parent, making her the longest serving foster parent with the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa.

"At 79 years of age, she has the spirit and energy of a 25-year-old," said O'Brien. "She is truly an exceptional individual and an inspiration to us all."

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