



HENRY  
BURY

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Verna Akey was 16 when she married. She never worked outside the home.

But she has spent almost a lifetime volunteering — much of it with the Ladies Auxiliary of Branch 99 of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch.

"I'm lost if I'm not down here at the Legion. It's like a second home to me and the people here are like family," she said.

"And if I can do something to help my Legion family, I'll do it."

The 78-year-old Akey has been with the ladies auxiliary since 1978 and became president in 2001.

She has also served as the Legion's banquet chairman for more than 20 years and has lost track of the number of functions she has attended to ensure everything went smoothly.

Her dedication to the auxiliary and Legion itself has not gone unnoticed either.

Akey was chosen the 2004 recipient of the Volunteer of the Year Award at the Legion's annual honours and awards banquet held earlier this fall.

"This award was a complete surprise considering that I sat in on the meetings of the honours and awards banquet committee and I didn't know anything about it," she said with a laugh. "Nobody even gave me an indication that I was being considered, let alone that I won."

Akey said she was left speechless when they announced her name at the banquet.

"I was shocked," she said. "It's an honour that I'm extremely proud of and it's a nice recognition for the work I do at the Legion."

The Legion also honoured Akey in 2000 by presenting her with the Legionnaire of the Year Award.

The Westmount Drive resident said she likes to keep busy and volunteering is the ideal way.

The Belleville native was raised on Highway 2 just east of Belleville and walked to the one-room Front Road School about three kilometres away. She also attended the church next door to the school.

Akey never went to high school.

"My mom wasn't that well and I had to

stay home and look after her and the rest of the family," she said.

Two years later, she met her husband-to-be, Gordon Akey, who was working on a nearby farm.

They married Oct. 10, 1941. She was only 16 years old.

"It was the wartime and people got mar-