

By Henry Bury  
THE INTELLIGENCER

Bob Clute's success as a car dealership owner and his determination to make this a better community for everyone has earned him the inaugural Businessman of the Year laurels.

The owner of Bob Clute Pontiac Buick GMC Ltd. and Saturn Belleville was presented with the first trophy during the 2004 Salute to Quinte and Area Businessmen Luncheon held Wednesday at the Ramada Inn and sponsored by The Intelligencer and The Trentonian.

Clute said he was left almost speechless by the honour.

"In my mind, there are far

more deserving people of an award of this nature," he said. "I can only say that I'm very proud to accept this honour."

Belleville Intelligencer publisher Michael Power told the Park Room audience that a number of extremely worthy candidates were nominated by the public for top businessman honours in what will now be an annual event for both newspapers.

A committee of community members reviewed the nominations and chose two finalists and the winner.

The two finalists were Belleville's Mark Rashotte, owner of Royal LePage ProAlliance Realty and the Empire Theatre and Trenton's Ralph Weaver, found-

ing funeral director of Weaver Family Funeral Homes and a licensed funeral director since 1936.

"Our winner this year is an individual who attacks life, who throws himself into whatever task is in front of him, whether it be running and expanding his business or many of the community projects, boards and committees he sits on," Power said moments before asking Clute to join him on stage for the trophy presentation.

Power commended Clute for his many accomplishments in his business life and with community projects.

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# Evanshen an inspiration for businessman of the year

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Clute has spent the past 33-years with General Motors — 20 years in various executive positions before purchasing his first GM dealership in 1991 on Highway 62 north of Highway 401 in Belleville. He purchased Belleville Saturn on Dundas Street West in April and now employs 75 workers between both dealerships.

He has belonged to several fundraising and community groups since coming to Belleville. He is currently treasurer of the Belleville General Hospital Foundation and belongs to the Belleville Rotary Club, Belleville Cancer Society and Quinte Arts Council.

Clute helped raised money for the Wally Dever Rink and headed the million-dollar campaign for the Riverfront Trail in Belleville. He has also chaired the Festival of Trees event and raised money for the arts council and cancer society.

"The key to Bob's overall success in the Quinte area, and what makes him a role model for other Quinte-area businessmen, is his determination to contribute his time and financial means back to the community," said the newspaper publisher.

"Bob is not content to let his laurels as a businessman define him as a person. He is constantly seeking new ways of improving his community through humanitarian efforts," Power said.

In his remarks, Clute told his peers he purchased several tickets for Wednesday's luncheon to listen to the inspirational story of former Canadian Football League

star Terry Evanshen who has had to rebuild his life literally one day at a time since a terrible automobile accident in July of 1988 robbed him of his long-term memory and impaired his short-term memory.

"I do believe there are people equally deserving of this honour in this community," he said. "But it's the community that really has made my life successful."



TERRY  
EVANSHEN

Clute recalled making the difficult decision to move to Belleville in 1990.

"The community opened its arms to me and my family and I can do no more than what I have done to say 'thank you,'" he said. "We have been blessed with business

success."

He thanked his wife of 33 years, Barbara-Jo, for standing by him throughout his career, and his son, Rob, for becoming a partner in the car business.

Clute turned his attention to Evanshen and said his message on life has touched him.

"I'm still not too old to incorporate those things not only in my business practice but in my life as well," he said.

Evanshen, a Montreal native, played wide receiver in the Canadian Football League for 14 years

and, in 1984, was the youngest person ever inducted into the Canadian Football Hall of Fame.

Now living in Brooklin, north of Whitby, the 59-year-old recounted for the audience how he's had to put his life back in order after a van went through a red light and smashed into his Jeep in the summer of 1988.

He lost all memory of his then-44 years of life, including his glorious CFL career and his family, and told the audience each day since the accident continues to be a struggle for him to recreate and hold onto his identity.

Evanshen's message is simple: Seize each day.

"It's not the highs and lows of life but what you do with it that counts," he told the audience.

Because of his memory loss, he takes each moment as it comes and encourages others to do likewise.

"I believe we'll get to the finish line when we take small steps, one moment at a time."

Evanshen said everyone should surround themselves with people who believe in them.

But he quickly added, "When we travel a bumpy road in life, your best friend is yourself. Look within ... you are in control of your thoughts and your team."

Evanshen encouraged everyone to remember an important fact of life.

"Never forget your greatest gift is your brain. Since the accident, I have great respect for that thing on top of my head."