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It's all about community for local award winners

By Julie Slack
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Mario Belvedere credits the wonderful people around him for his success as the Town's former chief administrative officer — a job he held for more than 14 years.

"I probably did not do as much as the mayor wants to believe I did," Belvedere laughed, when receiving his Milton Citizen of the Year Award at the Milton Chamber of Commerce 2013 Community Awards Gala.

"I had a wonderful group of people around me that did everything."

Eight etched-glass awards were handed out to Milton's longtime supporters and outstanding business people during the event at Granite Ridge Golf Club Friday night.

The sold-out, black-tie evening featured a seafood buffet appetizer and full-course dinner. The largest crowd ever for the annual event watched video presentations on each award recipient, outlining their individual contributions.

For Belvedere, his contributions are numerous, as he watched small-town Milton grow from a tiny community to that of more than 100,000.

"I'd have a little idea and I'd say to Jennifer (Reynolds, the Town's community services director) 'let's see if we can build a town hall over there, and then maybe we can build a velodrome, maybe an arts centre too,'" he recalled. "But the mayor doesn't want to spend any money, so we've got to get sponsors too, so I'll get that and you run the building part."

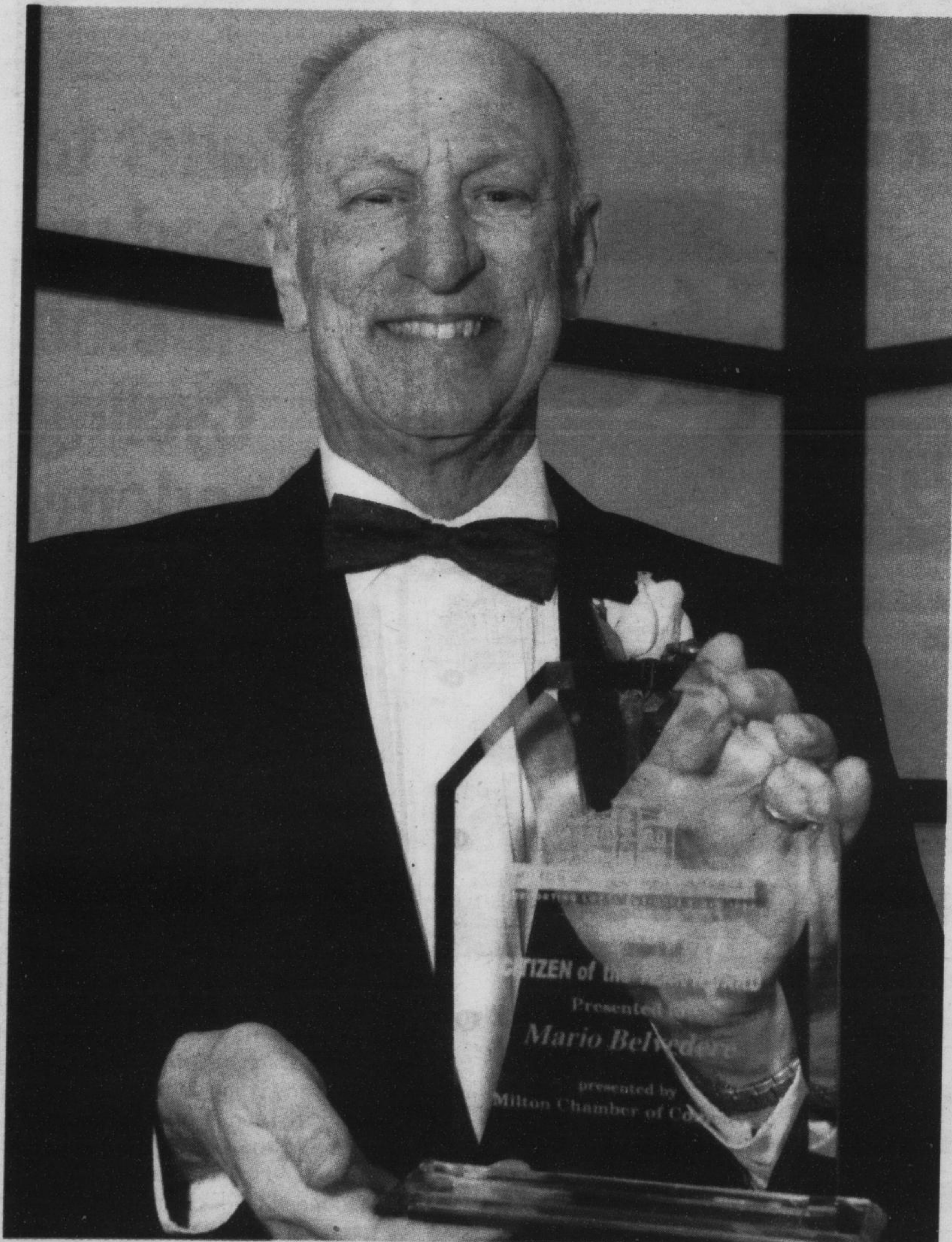
"I said to Paul (Cripps, the Town's engineer-

ing services director) 'we need to build a road to the velodrome' and I figured we'd get \$500,000 in sponsors to build the road and that would be great," he added. "He came back with \$3 million in sponsorship."

"It's amazing to me that you give a challenge to somebody and they do more than you thought," he said. "They deserve all the credit — more than me."

Belvedere also credited the developers in town, and shared a similar story about the woodlots in town.

"We told them, we want you to give us old woodlots; well guess what? — they did," he said, adding the town has 15 natural woodlots. "Milton's the only city in the GTA that got the developers to give us — for free — environmental woodlots and they're all linked by trails. We asked them to give us trails to link them... what an amazing story." Similar stories were heard from other award recipients throughout the evening — 17



Former Town CAO Mario Belvedere shows his Citizen of the Year Award. Graham Paine / Metroland West Media Group (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog)

inside

Opinion	6
Hot Listings	25
Sports	33
Classifieds	38

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