

Love means you never have to walk alone, Albin Curtis tells audience

Over the past several decades, from supporting local charity events to simple acts of kindness like delivering meals to neighbours.

In receiving the Lifetime Achievement award, Albin Curtis spoke of losing her first husband two decades ago — a tragedy that she said ultimately led to a blessing of tremendous support from the community.

"Through this help I learned the true meaning of love," she said, going on to quote Mother Teresa's famous words, "Love has to be put into action, and that action is service." "This lesson of service inspired me to act by giving back to the people of Milton," she said. Albin Curtis thanked her family, husband Mark Curtis and the community for teaching her that "love means you never have to walk alone."

Similar stories of community support were shared by other award recipients, like Margaret Saliba, who earned the title of Joyce Hagevik Volunteer of the Year.

Saliba champions fundraising for the Milton District Hospital Foundation through her an-

nual Black and White Pajama party, which has brought in almost \$37,000 in three years. But she was quick to share the limelight with others.

"This award doesn't belong to me alone. It belongs to all of the people who support me," she said, primarily crediting the Milton Area Female Entrepreneur (MAFE) networking group of more than 1,400 women for her success. "Because of this group I'm able to do what I do to the extent that I do."

She encouraged others to get involved in making the community a better place. "Remember, it's in you to give, and you'll be amazed at what you get back."

One could say fellow MAFE member and local photographer Laurie Goodman has already heeded Saliba's advice, giving back to the community through her Life Message project, which allows women to share their words of inspiration with others.

She has taken countless empowering images of women holding a small black chalkboard with their life message written on it — pho-

tos that she ended up compiling into a book. The initiative, which led to Goodman's own life message of "follow the goose bumps," was a key factor in her earning the Citizen of the Year award.

"I'd like to thank everyone for giving me the ultimate goose bumps moment," she said. "I will look at this award as a call to action; a call to be more, a call to do more."

The emotional moment of the evening came from momstown Milton owner Sam Kassam-Macfie, who was overwhelmed to be named Milton's Entrepreneur of the Year.

In a choked up voice, she spoke of the long and sometimes difficult journey to success she has been on with her business, which offers educational programming for children and support for mothers.

It's a challenge; you feel alone, you feel isolated," she said.

"But being in the Milton community is awesome. I'm not alone. I have so much support in this community."

Kassam-Macfie also shared her advice for other aspiring entrepreneurs. "It's not going to be easy, but it is going to be worth it."

Lori-Ann McLeod of Oxygen Pilates and Fitness was also nominated.

Re/Max sales representative and MAFE group founder Sandy Hatzis was named Business

Person of the Year. Hatzis was unable to attend the awards gala, but spoke in a pre-recorded video message about how much she enjoys working with all different kinds of homebuyers. "I genuinely love my job."

Dr. Garnet Maley of the Primecare Family Health Team and Intrigue Media part owner Fred Scheuer were also nominated.

Claiming the title of Business of the Year (99 employees or less) was RDC Networks, a computer network IT support service headed up by Ward 1 Councillor Robert Duvall and his wife, Carol Thomson-Duvall.

"It's a great honour. We're thankful for all the people who've made us successful," Duvall said. "We all give back as companies. I'm very glad to give back and make sure the community is looked after."

C.F. Crozier and Associates and Stevens Resource Group were also nominated.

The Chamber also recognized Del Ridge Homes for constructing a net zero energy building in Milton by bestowing the Civic Improvement of the Year award on the company. "The reward for us is to know that the technology and science that's contained in the building is unparalleled in Canada," said David de Sylva, who co-owns the company with George Le Donne. "You should know that and be proud of it."



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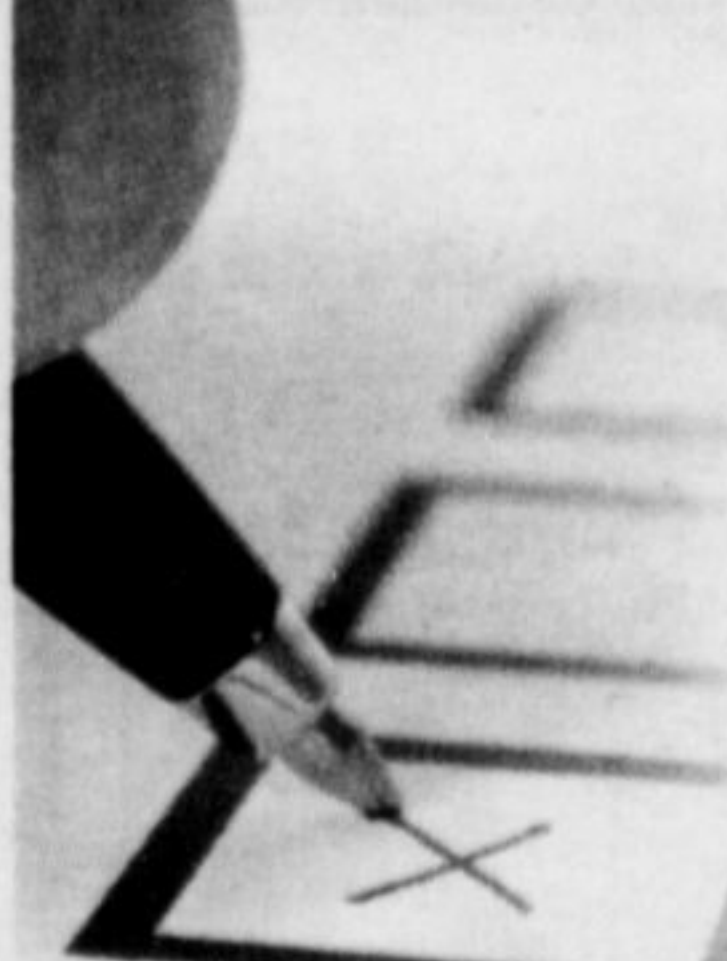


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