



Ib Fynbo and his wife Clemence pose in front of a display board during the 28th Citizen of the Year reception at Holy Name of Jesus Church Hall Oct. 14. A fixture in the business community, Fynbo was honoured with the award for his years of volunteerism in the area.

Ib Fynbo honoured as Citizen of the Year

BY DANIEL SCHWAB

Ib Fynbo, a staple of the business and volunteer community in Essex for years, was given a “huge” honour Oct. 15.

Fynbo was named the 28th Citizen of the Year during the Essex Fun Fest this past summer and dozens of friends, family members and well-wishers turned out to formally congratulate the Danish immigrant for years of service to the community during a reception at Holy Name Church Hall.

“Some of the people who’ve won this award in the past are outstanding,” said Fynbo, 67. “To follow in their footsteps is outstanding.”

Fynbo was accompanied by his wife Clemence, their two sons Philip and Eric, and their wives and children.

“It’s very gratifying,” Clemence said of her husband receiving the award. “It’s an endorsement of what he’s all about.”

Fynbo came to Canada in 1965 with \$200 in his pocket after studying at a business school in Denmark. His dream was to run a business, and that dream was realized when he became

the owner of a Home Hardware store in Essex in 1978.

After a natural gas explosion in 1980 devastated much of downtown Essex, Fynbo’s determination had him working harder than ever. In the years following he rebuilt the store, which is now 54,000 square feet, and “the best Home Hardware in Canada” according to its owner.

Bill Gay, president of Heritage Essex, called Fynbo an “eternal optimist...one who builds rather than destroys. A man who truly knows the meaning of the old maxim, when the going gets tough, the tough get going.”

But during the reception, Fynbo’s keen business sense and economic perseverance were second to his good nature and volunteerism.

It’s a side of the man that is not always recognized, but always appreciated, said Business Improvement Area Manager Marlene Markham-Gay.

“(Fynbo) would not want you to know about all the little good things he’s done for people, because that’s not the way he operates,” she said. “He does many good deeds, especially for people who need a little help

getting back on their feet.”

Fynbo is a founding member of the BIA. He has also spent years volunteering with the Knights of Columbus, St. Vincent de Paul and the Rotary Club of Essex.

“I didn’t invent volunteering, you taught it to me,” Fynbo told the audience attending the reception. “In this place, there’s a spirit and a will.”

Fynbo credited Clemence, his wife of more than 40 years, for being “my equal partner in business and ahead of me in family matters.”

The couple’s entrepreneurial legacy extended to include a Home Furniture store in 2003.

Before his retirement last year, Fynbo was credited with Home Hardware’s Paul Strauss Public Relations Award.

“You work because you want to,” Fynbo said. “When you get recognized by all your peers, it’s very nice.”

Fynbo also received personal congratulations from Essex Mayor Ron McDermott, Essex MPP Bruce Crozier and Councillor Morley Bowman on behalf of Essex MP Jeff Watson.

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