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Ontario conservation advocates honoured with awards

BY FREE PRESS STAFF

For McGregor resident Dan Bissonnette, it was like lightning struck twice.

Three weeks ago, the North American Plant Society honoured the Naturalized Habitat Network with the Paul McGaw Memorial Award for its conservation efforts.

On Oct. 20, the network's program co-ordinator was "stunned" when notified that he would be receiving a similar award for his personal environmental efforts.

The Carolinian Canada Coalition celebrated the work of a number of individuals and groups in southwest Ontario during a ceremony at the Elmerst Inn in Ingersoll Oct. 20.

Bissonnette was selected for being a "strong proponent of the value of native species ... who tirelessly promotes native plants and naturalization of gardens."

He has worked with the network since its inception five years ago. In that time, Bissonnette has promoted

environmental awareness and the importance of native trees and plants through workshops, seminars and books.

He is also one of the individuals responsible for saving Essex County's Marshfield Woods from development in the late 1990s.

"It's exciting," Bissonnette said about the award. "It's an honour just to be nominated."

One of the things Bissonnette prides himself on is having spoken to every garden club in Essex County over the past few years.

Another project he spearheaded with the network was the "Carolinian Cascade." It's a West Nile Virus-proof rain barrel developed to feed through eavestroughs for trees and shrubs. Since last spring, 80 barrels have been sold.

"If you would calculate the amount of water (the barrels) have conserved, it would fill a small swimming pool," he said.

Bissonnette has also been

teaching a landscaping course since 2002. The course highlighted conservation, native plants and sustainable landscaping, and educated nearly 500 people.

Bissonnette has worked to create two native tree arboreta - one near Wallaceburg and another in Leamington.

Before joining the network, he also spent time as a volunteer host for a CBC Radio show about gardening.



DAN BISSONNETTE

Harrow man presented with National Trails Day Award

The Essex Trails, Walkways and Bikeways Committee honoured Harrow resident Robert Robinson with a National Trails Day Award Oct. 16.

Ward 2 Councillor Bill Caixeiro said Robinson earned the award for his "commitment to the preservation, enhancement and conservation of trails."

Caixeiro said Robinson

maintains about a one-kilometre section of the Chrysler Canada Greenway, cutting grass and picking up garbage on the site.

"He doesn't do it to gain anything," Caixeiro said. "He goes over and above. I hope this encourages people to take care and keep up the trails."



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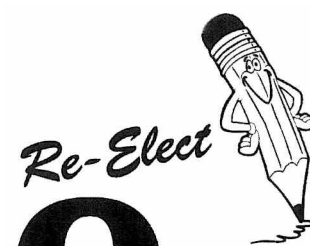
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