

# Posthumous award highlights celebration

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Two respectful standing ovations greeted the first-ever posthumous award presented by the Character Community Foundation of York Region Wednesday evening.

The parents of York Regional Police Const. Garrett Styles, killed last year in the line of duty, accepted the community hero award for their son on stage at the Richmond Hill Centre for the Performing Arts.

The uplifting evening saw 137 nominees take to the stage to be honoured for their efforts to show best character traits at school, work and home.

However, the audience was solemn and reflective when Garry Styles, his voice breaking, said during the "trying time" since his son's death, "what helped is the support we received and are still receiving from the community".

Const. Styles was honoured for an act of character in a difficult situation and presenter Police Chief Eric Jolliffe said the officer was "unselfish, even in his final moments".

Summing up the inspiration and theme for the evening was the top character champion, Debora Kelly, Editor in chief of nine York Region Media Group newspapers and busy mother of two, she is fully involved in her community as a director of Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation, president of Belinda's Place Foundation and many more civic causes, including the Character Community Foundation.

She told the audience she is "sincerely and deeply honoured" by the award, particularly because of the respect she has for former recipients of the prestigious award that include former Markham mayor Don Cousens, the founder of the character movement in York Region, and retired police chief Armand LaBarge.

"I'm sure those of you who have also been honoured tonight can empathize when I say it is somewhat nerve-wracking to have this much attention called to one's character ... I've had to remind myself the character awards aren't about acknowledging anything close to perfection of character, or judging



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the content of our character.

"Tonight is about celebrating our shared and persistent commitment to strive to live with character."

She acknowledged the Character Community role is being "both a relentless and gentle call to action to us" to embrace the character traits.

"Forgive me for taking liberty with the words of Aristotle, but I, too, believe we are what we repeatedly do," she said. "Character, then, is not an act but a habit."

She added she shared the award with her parents and family, as well as with her company and its publisher Ian Proudfoot.

"I'm proud to work for a company that is a role model for socially responsible leadership that is making a positive difference in the communities we serve."

From the youngest Grade 1 nominee — Caiden Driscoll of Mount Albert Public School — to senior citizens, the audience recognized people who demonstrate good citizenship, innovation, perseverance, courage and integrity.

Alice Sandiford of Regency Acres Public School in Aurora earned the

top elementary character award, presented by Mr. Proudfoot. The Grade 6 student has raised more than \$10,000 in a variety of charity efforts, from a lemonade stand to donating one third of her newspaper delivery pay to community causes.

Markham's Shane Feldman won the secondary student award. The Grade 12 student at Westmount Collegiate founded the Count Me In organization to connect youths to volunteer efforts.

He was praised for not only inspiring youths, but creating tangible social change in York Region and beyond.

In the adult character category, Richmond Hill's Jan Robertson was presented with the glass keepsake award. A liver transplant recipient herself, she has mentored other transplant patients, helped create a Polycystic Kidney Disease Foundation and continually spreads the message about registering to be an organ donor.

Mul Raj Sethi of Richmond Hill received the senior of character award for his work with the Indian Seniors Club, an Ontario seniors

coalition and his long dedication to both family and country.

The public school character award went to Waabgon Gamig First Nations School in Georgina. Putting aside any of their own difficulties, grades 3 to 5 students rallied others from across York Region to help First Nations residents in Attawapiskat through a clothing and blanket drive.

St. Margaret Mary Catholic Elementary in Vaughan earned the Catholic school award, especially for the school's social justice group, which organizes local food and coat drives and in the past four years has, through Free the Children, raised money to build a school in Kenya.

Foundations Private School in Aurora earned the alternative school award for its charity efforts and the "yes we can" attitude encouraged among all students.

Aurora teacher Helen Reaume was the top educator of character, for her 33 years of teaching, especially in special education. She has taught children with Down syndrome to read through music and spearheaded many innovative

Retired York Regional Police Staff Sgt. Garry Styles addresses the audience as York police Chief Eric Jolliffe stands with Carol Styles at the sixth annual Character Community Awards Celebration. The Styles' son, Const. Garrett Styles, who was killed in the line of duty last year, was named Community Hero at the event.

teaching programs for other teachers.

Visual artist Lyan ChrisB Liu of Markham was presented the character through arts award for her inspiring arts workshops at home and abroad. After the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan, China, she travelled to the hard-hit community and worked with hundreds of young survivors to express their sorrows through art therapy.

Frits Pencilla of Markham received the sports award for his mentoring and coaching of elementary basketball students at Holy Family School. Even when he went on to high school, he continued to train and coach the elementary students and does so now as a busy college student — offering respect and praise to each member of the team.

Vaughan's Louise Dudley earned the business person of character award. The mother of two and small business owner of Monaco Sun gives staff time off to volunteer at schools and in the community, strongly supports the co-op student program and employs those same students after graduation. She supports the Yellow Brick House second shelter campaign and motivates other businesses to do the same.

The organization of character award went to Cintas of Newmarket for its free laundry services for Inn from the Cold shelter guests. Cleaning laundry and bedding for 20 guests each night over six months of winter saves supporting churches' money and ensures sanitary conditions.

Matthew Kavanagh was lauded as the environmental champion for his work at St. Theresa of Lisieux in Richmond Hill. From nesting boxes for birds and park cleanups to organic waste and blue box programs at the school, he models and inspires students and staff to commit to environmental change.

Newmarket's York Regional Police Const. Paul Marisette earned the change our world community award for the respect and compassion he shows while mentoring youths at home and through church, plus using his vacation time to travel to an orphanage in China to bring children donations.

WORD OF MOUTH IS GOOD

BUT OVER  
30,000 PAIRS OF EYES

Sun-Tribune