



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

When she can find a moment, citizen of the year Joanne Iannuzzi enjoys working on puzzles. She founded the local multicultural association.

# Volunteering way of life for town's top citizen

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When the annual call for citizen of the year nominations is made, Joanne Iannuzzi wonders who she should nominate.

The former town council candidate did not put forth anyone's name this year because she did not want to pick a favourite.

However, unbeknownst to her, others nominated her.

"Surreal," is how she described hearing the news she is Stouffville's 2013 Citizen of the Year.

Mrs. Iannuzzi, 58, and her family moved from Markham to Stouffville in 1989 and since then she has volunteered or been associated with more organizations than she can count.

The award, sponsored by The Sun-Tribune, will be presented during the opening ceremonies of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival June 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the festival's marquee tent in Memorial Park.

Win or not, Mrs. Iannuzzi was going to be there as a volunteer.

"Working with others to do good

things for other people makes me feel good," she told The Sun-Tribune.

Volunteering is nothing new to Mrs. Iannuzzi, who recalls doing it as early as age six. But she gave it up when she got married and started to raise a family.

She got back into volunteering 24 years ago out of necessity.

When trying to register her daughters for Brownies, Mrs. Iannuzzi was told all the groups were full, but if she wanted to volunteer, that would open up more spaces for local girls, including hers.

She did.

It wasn't a stretch for Mrs. Iannuzzi to become a Stouffville Brownie leader. She had been one before in Toronto.

Mrs. Iannuzzi is also a part of the Mayor's Youth Council as well as the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 459 Stouffville and its ladies' auxiliary.

She is active with the York Regional Police as a registered volunteer, liaison committee member and community policing centre team leader.

In 2009, she joined the

CrimeStoppers of York Region board.

Mrs. Iannuzzi won a CrimeStoppers International award for best special project for a multi-language brochure she designed.

*'Working with others to do good things for other people makes me feel good.'*

The brochure was shared around the world in seven languages.

Two years ago, she founded the Stouffville Multicultural Association in this now diverse town.

"So far," it's the only organization Mrs. Iannuzzi has started.

"I was amazed to see how much drive, passion and strength can come from this little woman with a big heart," wrote Dolly Bhatia-Frolick in her nomination.

The idea for the multicultural association was floating around in Mrs. Iannuzzi's busy head for about 10 years.

"I'm always working on something with somebody, somewhere," she admitted.

However, it was during the 2010 municipal election campaign in which she ran for Ward 6 councillor against incumbent and eventual winner Rob Hargrave, that she realized it was time to make her idea a reality.

Mrs. Iannuzzi plans on running again for councillor next year.

"I feel I can do more for my community if I'm in public office," she said.

Mrs. Iannuzzi admitted she can volunteer, work full-time and raise a family with her husband, Perry, because she's organized and has a lot of help.

"She truly cares deeply for her community and wants to see the organizations and their causes flourish," Mr. Iannuzzi wrote in his nomination.

While trying to better the community, Mrs. Iannuzzi has helped others flourish. In 1995, Colette Larsen was in the local Girl Guides' senior branches group.

Mrs. Iannuzzi was the 15- to 17-

year-olds leader. She taught them something Ms Larsen has never forgotten — network and get out into the community.

"Prior to that, we were happy to meet in each other's basements and develop our friendships and skills in that way. Joanne helped us realize that other units and other groups had so much to offer..." she wrote in her nomination.

Citizen of the Year isn't the only accolade Mrs. Iannuzzi has received for all her efforts.

She was named the 2011 Stouffville Community Policing Centre volunteer of the year and later this year she will receive the Gold Merit pin from Girl Guides of Canada for her outstanding service to guiding.

Mrs. Iannuzzi does not just volunteer. She, in more cases than not, sits on the organization's board of directors.

"If you allow yourself to be put in positions of power, you can do more for your community, which is also what I hope to be doing from a seat in public office later next year," she said.