

FOCA Achievement Awards honourable mention to Lake St. Peter Property Owners Association

BY MICHAEL RILEY Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

In their latest email newsletter on March 3, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations announced the winner and honourable mentions awards for its 2021 FOCA Achievement Award. One of this year's honourable mentions awards was given to the Lake St. Peter Property Owners' Association, based in Maynooth, who were given credit for increasing membership, circulating stewardship materials and environmental initiatives during COVID-19. The FOCA Achievement Award celebrates successes of the FOCA waterfront community and encourages peer sharing of best practices. It is presented to a FOCA member association every year, at the discretion of the FOCA board of directors, and it has been given out for the past 25 years. FOCA is a not-for-profit membership organization that has provided a voice for waterfront property owners for nearly 60 years. They represent 250,000 waterfront property owners and over 500 community groups across Ontario. They provide support through education, communications and government advocacy, and their vision is to have thriving and sustainable waterfronts across the province, now and in the future. Bonny McCleery Scanlan is the LSPPOA and Hastings Highlands Interlake environment coordinator, and told Bancroft This Week on March 9 that they had just received the honourable mention award certificate the previous day and that they will be communicating this achievement to the public soon. The LSPPOA's efforts saw their membership increase 50 per cent in 2021. They assembled and distributed information packages educating people on shoreline health so people will understand the need for a shoreline bylaw; the Watersheds Canada-Lake Links-Lake Protection workbook, the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council rack card, a Good Neighbour code and the Safe Quiet Lakes-Boaters Etiquette rack card, which was dropped off door to door during COVID-19 while adhering to all applicable pandemic restrictions. There was also a further crisis update added regarding the proposed closure of the Lake St. Peter Fire Station, which is yet to be resolved. The information was shared with six other lake associations and Hastings Highlands council, and the LSPPOA also distributed 250 campaign packages to members and non-members in the Lake St. Peter and Boulter community. McCleery Scanlan says that the LSPPOA's goal is always to educate, share information and resources to all, and that they leverage from recognized groups such as the local BASC, Watersheds Canada, FOCA and from other lake associations. She says that reaching out to their members and non-members was well received as they saw from their memberships going up. She says they share information with Hastings Highlands council and staff and that their partner associations of the Hastings Highlands Interlake also shared various pieces with their membership via email, Facebook, websites and newsletters. "With the success received from the 2021 campaign, our plan is to do another door to door and contact-free campaign for 2022. One of the messages will be Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program; Clean, Drain and Dry due to the new Ontario regulations when transporting watercraft and bait," she says. McCleery Scanlan told Bancroft This Week on March 10 that their award came as they saw their membership numbers increasing, which made them feel that the messages they were sending out were being well received. "However, when an association such as FOCA recognizes you, that is certainly a feather in our cap!"