

Business association celebrates Citizen of the Year

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By Chris Drost

It was a busy evening at The Arlington on Nov. 18 as a crowd gathered for the 29th annual general meeting of the Maynooth & Hastings Highlands Business Association and the announcement of Citizen of the Year.

The association's director, Joe Shulman, welcomed members and highlighted upcoming events organized through the business association. This year is the 15th anniversary of the Brighten the Night Christmas parade, happening on Saturday, Dec. 8. Home Again will again take over the Maynooth community centre earlier in the day for photos with Santa and a silent auction, all to raise funds for its programs to help lost and abandoned pets. Emond Hall and The Arlington will be bustling with more than 40 market vendors already registered to participate. There will also be live music at the Arlington. One difference this year will be the parade route. Instead of ending at the ANAF, the parade, which starts at 5 p.m., will end at the Maynooth community centre this year at approximately 5:30 p.m. where the party for children will include food and treats and of course a visit with Santa. Bob Van Balen Walter has kindly offered to be the parade marshall as he has for 15 continuous years. The business association is still looking for a helper for Santa for the post parade festivities.

Shulman thanked everyone on the MHHBA executive for their various roles during the past year. The new slate of directors include: Carla Van Balen Walter, Carol Russell, Joe Shulman, Amy West, Ro Munich and Laura Culic.

There will be six regular meetings in 2019, with each one of the directors chairing one meeting on a rotating basis.

Shulman noted that 2019 will be the 30th anniversary of the MHHBA and "there is a lot to be proud of as it has lasted 30 years as a volunteer-run organization."

The Southern Ontario Ice Festival will be held in Maynooth again this year from Feb. 8-10. Anyone with extra accommodation space is asked to step forward as it will be needed. Ro Munich of The Arlington will act as the base for referring people who are looking for a place to stay during the weekend.

The annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place again this year, an event that often attracts up to 200 children. Those with Easter-themed costumes are encouraged to attend as "it adds value to the event", according to Shulman.

Shulman advised that Keith and Donna Buck, who organized the Maynooth Garlic Festival the past two years, are stepping aside and that the event lead, the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council, is actively seeking another individual or individuals to champion this very popular event on its behalf.

The Destination Guide's planned release date is the May long weekend. The deadline for payment and submissions is April 1.

Barb Linderberg, who took on the role of administrator for the business organization just eight months ago, presented a full list of accomplishments and insight into some of the challenges and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs in the community. Linderberg has focused on grant research and writing, a visitor website portal, a marketing project and Maynooth Madness. She attended Ontario Highlands Tourism Organization and Hastings County events as representative of the organization.

The short-term project focused on working with Wordbird Media to create story content for the website is almost complete, but more Facebook and Instagram likes are needed to spread the word. After months of work Linderberg shared that she believes a long-term marketing strategy in cooperation with the municipality is the direction the association should take.

That includes a top priority of a website revamp that includes someone who will actively monitor it and refresh it on an ongoing basis. People are looking for an on-line presence with user generated content.

Following the close of the annual general meeting, approximately 30 attendees enjoyed a pot luck supper in celebration of the successful year. Then it was time for the much anticipated "Citizen of the Year" announcement. Shulman explained that this award is given for outstanding service to the community, beyond the call of duty, for an individual, couple, group or committee.

Shulman read a list of past recipients and asked those in attendance to rise and be acknowledged. Past recipients included, Carol Baragar and The Maynooth Public School members, Joe and Bessie Best, Donald Bloom, Michelle Bruce, Lorraine Cameron, Jan and Wes Grant, Christine Hass, Maynooth & Area Food Bank, Loggers' Games Committee "Bob and Nancy Robinson, Hald and Wilma Robinson, Harry and Diane Wadsworth, Maynooth Mud Dawgs "Tracy and Frank Hagar, Angel and Tom Scott, Marie Maschke, Pat McGillivray (the first recipient), George Milliken, Doug Miles, Sharon Mullen, Tom Newman, Carla Van Balen Walter, Jason and Collen Reynolds, Bryan Sharpe, Joe Shulman, Loreen Trolly and Bob Van Balen Walter.

Before announcing the Citizen of the Year, Shulman asked the community's poet laureate, Greg Thomas, to draw a name from

paid-up MHHBA members for a free membership for 2019. The lucky winner was Saidie's Pottery.

Shulman revealed that the winner of this year's Citizen of the Year, the Merry Micks, started as a family group that had made music an integral part of their daily life, at home on the farm, in church and in the community. They first began performing publicly in 1995, largely Celtic music. They have used their talent to help raise funds for organizations and causes throughout the community, the food bank and Community Care and the Murder Mystery evenings, to name a few.

Shulman called Catherine Rull and Gloria Leveque, representing the Merry Micks, to the front to receive a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the MHHBA, as well as a number of other tokens of appreciation including a \$100 cheque from the business association and items donated by local businesses, two coffee cups courtesy of Foxfire Gallery, Gifts & Antiques, a 1952 Star Weekly magazine showing the newly crowned Queen Elizabeth from Toadstone Craftworks, Irish whiskey from the Maynooth LCBO, a certificate for The Granite donated by McMichael Jewellers, and an Irish drinking glass courtesy of the Old Peterson Rd. Gallery.

Catherine Rull thanked the association on behalf of the entire Merry Micks group for the recognition and gifts. She said, "We love what we do and do not expect to be recognized in this way. We just love sharing what we love." Rull also added, "One of the best things about small communities is recognizing, acknowledging and supporting each other for what we do. I am proud to live in Maynooth."

Following the announcement, Carol Russell, director, presented a year in review which included a video of the Maynooth Garlic Festival and one from Maynooth Madness 2018.

Russell also shared some of the recent accomplishments of the business association starting with the business retention and expansion project four years ago, the first impressions community exchange, the tourism brainstorming session and the results of the organization's advocacy for economic development, the hiring of Russ Grant, economic development & tourism leader. Russell also highlighted the success of the "quirky, artsy and fun" business directory, and the Maynooth and Lake St. Peter façade renovations (with the assistance of Community Futures).

The event closed with a call for everyone to grow the community by buying locally this holiday season.