

First annual Spirit of Inclusion Award goes to Maynooth student

By Chris Drost

On the afternoon of June 14, in the school yard at Maynooth Public School, graduating grade 6 student Jorja Layland, was presented with North Hastings Community Integration's Spirit of Inclusion Award for all of North Hastings.

"All the schools in North Hastings participated and the winner from each school was entered in to win the overall North Hastings award," says NHCIA's Laurie Oram. To be nominated for the Spirit of Inclusion Award, the individual needs to demonstrate their acceptance of others, including others regardless of differences. The winner must increase a sense of personal value and belonging to those around them and create a sense of community within the school. "The goal of the award is to raise awareness about inclusion within the schools and the community," explains Oram.

Maynooth Public School principal Lisa McKenna-Sutherland nominated Layland for the award because "she thinks of others ahead of herself and has demonstrated inclusion time and time again." McKenna-Sutherland noted that Layland has given up recesses to play board games with someone who was having trouble in school. When the discussion at the school turned to "Spirit Days," Layland made it clear that everyone should be included. In the classroom Layland looks for someone else who doesn't have a group and makes sure to include them. McKenna-Sutherland remembers watching Layland quietly help another student who was having difficulty tying his shoes. "The thing about Layland is that she does things in a natural and quiet way. She is very humble. I am proud to have nominated you," says McKenna-Sutherland.

Layland's parents and younger sister were also on hand for the presentation. Her mother said, "We are very proud" while Layland described the award as "cool" and said she was surprised to receive it.

Oram expressed her congratulations to Layland and added that NHCIA would like her to help out with one of their programs in the future. She presented Layland with \$100, a certificate and a cut-glass trophy. Individual school winners receive \$20 and a certificate.

Winners at the other schools in North Hastings were:

North Hastings High School ? Jeff Maxwell

York River Public School ? Kathleen Lake

Bird's Creek Public School ? Rowan Edgar

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic School ? Chase McDonald

Hermon Public School ? Mia Marshall

Coe Hill Public School ? Billy O'Hara

The Spirit of Inclusion Award is sponsored by the board of directors at North Hastings Community Integration Association.