

Jack Benham.

Jack is a resident of Damascus in the Township of Wellington North. For the past 25 years, he has worked tirelessly improving the lives of those around him through his work with the Grand River Conservation Authority, the Arthur Historical Society, and the Arthur & District Agricultural Society. Jack was instrumental in the creation of the *Arthur and Area World War I and World War II Veterans* book which honours and highlights those who served from Canada's Most Patriotic Village.

As part of his volunteer work, he has helped create and maintain numerous walking and hiking trails through Wellington North, most notably the West Luther and Arthur Trails. His work ethic knows no bounds and his willingness to help foster the next generation of stewards of the land by sharing his knowledge of nature is without compare.

Richard Boon

As the ranks of Canada's World War II veterans dwindle, the duty of remembrance falls to the next generation. For his entire life, Rick Boon learned the value of service from one of the best.

Much of Rick's life has been dedicated to young people as a dedicated coach and referee and he has helped children and youth achieve their full potential.

Throughout his 30 years as an educator, Rick ensured that Remembrance Day and the service of our Veterans was appropriately honoured. To this day, former students will recall the importance of those services and visits.

Since then, he has continued in helping others by fostering a sense of community and helping youth in remembering and honouring our Veterans by organizing the Remembrance Day Service for the Stratford Legion. Rick is dedicated in ensuring that we remember them.

Julie Docker-Johnson

Julie lives by the mantra “better together.” As the Community Connector at The Local Community Food Centre in Stratford, Julie thrives on helping members of our community connect with the resources they need to improve their life and those around them.

Julie has been actively involved as a long-time member of the Board and supporter of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in St. Marys. More recently she has played a leading role in supporting the Rotary Hospice of Stratford Perth and its annual Hike for Hospice. In 2017, Julie co-founded the Giving Tuesday Initiative to help not only raise funds for community projects, but also to foster a greater sense of community and togetherness.

Ronald Ellis

If you have ever attended a performance at the Drayton Festival Theatre, you will have met Ron Ellis. Ron has the special distinction of being known as Volunteer #1 with the Drayton Festival Theatre when it all started back in 1991. For the next 33 years, he has gone from helping the theatre get started, to ensuring that it continues to thrive as part of the Friends of Drayton Festival Theatre.

As a former Municipal Councillor, Ron believes in making the community a better place. This includes his involvement with a number of fundraising activities in and around the community. Most recently, Ron has been focused on supporting the Palmerston and District Hospital Foundation and the MRI Campaign to ensure that the health care needs of our communities are available for those who need them.

Stewart Grant

In a constantly evolving digital world, the importance of local journalism is more important than ever. For Stew Grant, that means doing the heavy lifting to ensure the community knows what is happening from the goings on at Town Hall to the puck drop at the arena.

Stewart is the owner and publisher of various community newspapers, including the St Marys Independent and the Stratford Times. Through these papers, his hope is to restore small town journalism which helps connect and promote communities across the region.

In addition to journalism, he is an active volunteer in the community. He is a member of the Rotary Club of St Marys and is involved with the St Marys Lincolns.

Michael Grosz

Our first responders carry a duty of service that goes beyond what many of us can even imagine.

Mike Grosz presently works with the Perth County Paramedics Services as their Logistics Coordinator. His career as a paramedic started in 1988 and over the course of his career, which spans more than 35 years, Mr. Grosz rose in the ranks to Platoon Commander.

He has served as a firefighter with the Listowel and then the North Perth Fire Department. Beginning as a volunteer firefighter in 1997, he went on to be promoted to Captain, Listowel Station Deputy Chief, and finally the Listowel Station District Chief in 2009.

His dedication and commitment to serving his community in times of emergency has provided comfort and assurance to the countless individuals he has assisted over the years.

Charles Hammond

Charlie Hammond has been a loyal and productive member of the Rotary Club of St Marys for over 30 years. He has served as president of the club and has been recognized with the distinction of being a Paul Harris Fellow, a program set up as a legacy for the founder of the Rotary Club, Paul Harris. Through Rotary, he has supported important causes at home and internationally.

Charlie has also been active in providing leadership within the St. Marys BIA and promoting the town. Without Charlie, St. Marys might have been a very different place today. He was one of a group of people to successfully bring the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame to St Marys. He served as a dedicated and respected governor and was a driving force in winning the bid against 13 other locations. He is a dedicated family man and loves serving his community.

Dianne Josling

Dianne Josling is a life-long resident of West Perth and has been a dedicated volunteer in the community for the past 40 years.

She is not only an active volunteer with the local Mitchell Optimist Club, where she is a Charter Member, but also with Optimist International and as President of the Canadian Children's Optimist Foundation helping to promote their belief in bringing out the best in our youth.

Prior to her retirement, Dianne was an elementary school teacher for over 30 years. She dedicates much of her time in being the Coordinator for the Annual Mitchell Music Festival. Previously, she has volunteered with the International Plowing Match, Mitchell Hawks, Retired Teachers' Association, a board member at the Ritz Villa, and Canvassing for local charities.

Ruth Kneider

Together with her husband Richard, you will find Ruth Kneider scooping ice cream, serving pizza, handing out turkeys, making Christmas special...in short, Ruth's compassion and love makes our community a place you want to live.

As one of two founders of Simple Dreams Ministry, Ruth is all about fulfilling "simple dreams". The purpose of the Ministry is to "help those in the community who have dreams or needs that don't seem achievable."

Every year, the Kneiders host the highly popular "To Stratford with Love" Christmas Banquet which brings together the community for an evening of food, fellowship, and fun. Ruth and Simple Dreams Ministry support the community with events such as Thanksgiving Dinner Giveaway, an Annual Pizza & Pool Party, and the \$2 dollar Giveaway.

Mary M^cIntosh

Mary's community involvement dates back nearly half a century when she and her husband John became foster parents for the very first time. Since then, she has shared her time and talent for countless causes and activities, including being a 4-H leader and being involved with Junior Farmers.

She has served as President of the Board of Directors of the Perth County Children's Aid Society and the Perth County Federation of Agriculture. She was also a director for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Mary was the Perth Environmental Farm Plan Coordinator and served as a Downie Ward Councillor for the Township of Perth South.

John Miller

John is known as a man of music. In 2001, with a team of local volunteers he created Stratford Summer Music to bring music back to Stratford. In 2018, he retired as its Founder and Artistic Director Emeritus. Under his leadership, the festival had grown to six weeks of dynamic indoor and outdoor concerts and events, with international praise for Summer Music's variety of performers from five continents and across Canada.

Prior to founding Stratford Summer Music, John had an extensive career in the arts and culture sector. He began a career with the Stratford Festival in 1980 and would go on to work in various roles, including as the National Director for the Canadian Music Centre and as the Executive Director of the Glenn Gould Foundation. Not one to sit idly by John has also helped to lead the artistic programming of the Huron Waves Music Festival.

William Nelson

There are few projects in the Mount Forest area that Bill Nelson has not been involved with. For over 40 years, Bill has given of his time as a member of the Mount Forest Lions Club and supported the club in many of their activities.

He is a person who is always willing to take on leadership roles having served as President of the Mount Forest and District Chamber of Commerce and as the Chair of the Mount Forest Business Improvement Area (BIA) and the Mount Forest Non-Profit Housing Foundation. He is a past-Treasurer with Big Brothers and Big Sisters. During his time as the Chair with the Louise Marshall Hospital Foundation, he helped to raise \$5 million in support of the Foundation. Through his work and actions, he has shown what dedication and service to the community is all about.

Cameron Porteous

Cameron has made an outstanding contribution to the Canadian theatre community. He has worked at various locations, including the Vancouver Playhouse and the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake. His career and passion for theatre and the arts has taken him across Canada. His work has spanned across Canadian television, film, and the stage over 5 decades. His imagination has allowed the creativity of Canadian artists to flourish and share their art on all levels great and small.

Locally, we are lucky that he has brought his talents to St. Marys where he serves as the Curator of the St. Marys Station Gallery. Among his own artistic undertakings, he has displayed his own work *The Battle of Queenston Heights* at the Gallery. He was also pivotal in ensuring the exhibits were available on an online platform for everyone to enjoy.

Debora Lynne Ritchie

Debb is a cornerstone in our community and a woman of extraordinary accomplishments and strengths. Her lifelong passion to volunteer started at an early age and has continued right up until the present. She thrives on being an engaged member of the community and sharing her resources to help local charities, schools, and service clubs. Debb is a quiet ambassador for North Perth. Among her contributions, she has volunteered with the Stratford Perth Community Foundation, St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Listowel, the Salvation Army, Perth Meadows, and the North Perth Women of Distinction Committee to name but a few.

She made a personal commitment to herself as a millennium challenge in 2000 to raise 5 million dollars. Since then, she has quietly raised almost 10 million dollars for local charities, schools, organizations, and those in need.

Conner Schmidt

Conner is a young man with a very bright future. A recent graduate of Wellington Heights Secondary School in Mount Forest, Conner was involved with several school activities in support of the broader community. This includes his work in support of the Relay for Life. Outside of school, he has spent his summer working with kids with the Wellington North Day Camp. He has volunteered to help coach both Hockey and Lacrosse; two sports that he himself has done well in.

He did all this while maintaining strong academic marks in school. Conner will continue to be a great asset to our community.

Jean Smelski

Many will recognize the Smelski Family farm from their 20 years of pumpkin sales at their farm along Highway 7/8 in Perth East. What they may not immediately recognize is Jean's many years of quiet, but dedicated community volunteerism.

Jean is a long-time member of the Stratford Probus Club where she ensures that club members can engage with one another and with interesting and insightful speakers. She is also a dedicated volunteer and serves as a Trustee on the Stratford General Hospital Foundation Board of Trustees. To honour their retirement from the pumpkin farm, Jean and her family provided financial support to the Hospital Foundation.

Together with her husband Richard, the Smelksi Family Fund was created within the Perth East Smart and Caring Community Fund at the Stratford Perth Community Foundation.

Bernard Van Herk

Bernard or “Bernie” as he is known around Stratford is a true cheerleader for the City of Stratford. Anyone who drove by his home on Huron Street would recognize his pride for his beloved city with the great gardens and displays in front of his home; complete with a statue of William Shakespeare. His gardens would celebrate local and national events in the most positive way possible.

He is well known as a dedicated and avid volunteer at the Ted Blowes Memorial Pollinator Peace Garden. Bernie has spent a lifetime cultivating the land and his gardens with beautiful flowers and he is passionate about sharing his knowledge with others.

Bernie is one of our youngest recipients; having celebrated his 22nd birthday on February 29th of this year. Like he has done on every leap year, this past February he was at the Stratford General Hospital – where he also worked for more than 30 years – on February 29th with cards and money for each baby born on that day.

Rose Van Sickle

Rose has been associated with the Girl Guides of Canada for the past 63 years. She spent time as a unit leader helping younger generations learn new skills and develop their own confidence to become future leaders themselves. As a steward of the environment, Rose has organized community clean-ups on Earth Day. She is an active member of the Harriston Historical Society and volunteered at the Plowing Match.

She has an interest in coins and stamps and has volunteered her time with various chapters such as the Waterloo Coin Club and the South Wellington Club. She is actively involved with the St. Paul's Anglican Church in Palmerston as the office secretary and helps support 4 others local churches in the community. Rose is dedicated to her community and can be seen helping at many local events and activities.

Belinda Wick-Graham

Belinda Wick-Graham is all about community building. For nearly 20 years, Belinda has been living and breathing economic development in support of her hometown. There are few events or causes that you don't see Belinda helping out at. She's the one who is there setting up before anyone else arrives and is turning out the lights at the end of the day.

Belinda is also a Director with the Minto Municipal Services Corporation which maintains the Harriston Lions Medical Centre.

She serves as the President of the Economic Developers Council of Ontario where her leadership is helping to share her success in Minto with communities across Ontario. Belinda's community is a more positive place to enjoy thanks to Belinda's leadership.

Donna Yundt

For over 20 years, Donna Yundt has been leading the charge in support of those living with Cystic Fibrosis and their families. She has been the driving force in support of the annual Perth County Walk to Make CF History and has made sure that next year it will expand its locations to engage more communities.

She has served on the Executive Committee for the Hope Chapter of Cystic Fibrosis Canada and has been instrumental in organizing the Christmas 50/50 Fundraiser. Among her fundraising efforts, she has organized an auction of signed guitars from Music in the Fields for CF Support.

She has been a true advocate for CF Warriors across the country to call for better access to treatments for Canadians living with CF. Donna sadly lost her son Baydon in 2019, but her work will help ensure that children born today with CF will live long and healthy lives.