

Township of
Langley



Est. 1873

NEWS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE: July 29, 2020

EXCEPTIONAL TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEERS RECOGNIZED

An individual who helped shine the national sports spotlight on the Township of Langley, people who promote sustainable agriculture, and a top student committed to humanitarian causes have been honoured for their exceptional volunteer efforts.

Each spring, the Township recognizes its many committed volunteers during a celebration which includes the presentation of the Eric Flowerdew Volunteer Award, the John and Muriel Arnason Award, and the Pete Swensson Outstanding Community Youth Award.

While this year's event was cancelled due to COVID-19, the recipients were presented with their awards by Township of Langley Mayor Jack Froese in small, socially distanced ceremonies.

"Volunteers play such an important role in our community," said Froese. "Everything they do and the time and expertise they generously give has a huge impact on everyone around them. Volunteers truly make a difference and it is our honour to recognize them and let them know how much they are appreciated."

"Congratulations to this year's recipients and thank you to the hundreds of hard-working volunteers whose contributions help make the Township of Langley such a wonderful place," Froese said.

Named after a former Parks and Recreation commissioner, school trustee, and municipal councillor, the **Eric Flowerdew Volunteer Award** recognizes an individual who promotes an active living lifestyle that enhances Langley's quality of life and community spirit through creative, cultural, physical, or social pursuits.

The 2019 Flowerdew Award was presented to **Nigel Easton**.

For 17 years, Easton was manager of the Langley Curling Centre and served on the Board of Directors for Curl BC. He helped bring several high-profile events to Langley Township, including the 2020 New Holland Canadian Junior Curling Championships. Working with the Township, the curling club, and volunteers, he helped ready the George Preston Community Centre for the national event and ensure its success earlier this year.

Easton is dedicated to introducing people of all ages and abilities to the sport. He has helped individuals in wheelchairs get the training they need to enjoy curling and worked with the Township to build an access ramp at George Preston.

He is also active with the Nicomekl Enhancement Society. As treasurer, Easton applied for government grants and reached out to the Pacific Salmon Foundation, putting the Society in a profitable position and allowing it to better improve salmon habitat.

The **John and Muriel Arnason Award** is named after former Township of Langley Councillor and Freewoman Muriel Arnason and her husband John. It is given to two people who volunteer together to make the Township a better place.

The 2019 Award was presented to **Carol Paulson and Dave Melnychuk**.

As founding directors of the Langley Sustainable Agriculture Foundation - who serve as secretary and president - the pair have been helping ensure farmers and food production thrive into the future since the volunteer-run organization was created in 2011.

As a team, they educate farmers and the public through workshops, educational materials, and community events, and recently launched the new Langley Learning Farm. They are the driving force behind the Ecological Services Initiative, which was undertaken with the Township to reward farmers for voluntarily maintaining ecologically sensitive areas on their land.

Melnychuk has served on the Township's Agricultural Advisory Committee and Paulson has been a member of the Economic Development and the Recreation, Culture, and Parks Advisory Committees.

Also nominated for the Arnason Award were Langley Animal Protection Society volunteers **Karen and Rob Hunt**.

Presented to a student in Grade 11 or 12 in recognition of their athletic achievement, academic accomplishment, leadership, and commitment to the community, the **Pete Swensson Outstanding Community Youth Award** is named after the Township's first Recreation Director, an internationally recognized athlete, photographer, and originator of the Langley Walk.

Winner of the 2019 – 2020 Award was **Prabhasha Wickramarachchi**.

With an average of 97%, Wickramarachchi is one of the top graduating students at Walnut Grove Secondary, having received outstanding academic awards for Pre-AP Biology, Pre-Calculus, and French. She was the Concours D'art Oratoire French Speech Champion for Langley in both 2015 and 2018 and topped her school's Chemistry Contest.

A vital member of the Walnut Grove Track and Field Team who trains with Universal Athletics Club, she has excelled in local, provincial, and national competitions. Wickramarachchi is the Fraser Valley Champion for 400 Metres, a member of the Junior Girls 4 x 100 Provincial Championship team, and won gold at the BC Summer Games. In 2019, she placed 6th in Canada for U18 Women's 400 Metre Hurdles, in her rookie year in the event.

Wickramarachchi has committed over 400 hours to her school's Humanitarian Club, is part of Langley's Youth Homelessness initiative, serves with the Starfish Backpack Program and Ocean Research Team, and raises funds for several causes. As well, she is the founder of Operation S.H.E. – Safety, Health, and Education, which purchases supplies for a girls' orphanage in Sri Lanka.

Nominees for the Pete Swensson Outstanding Community Youth Award included:

Alex Sol - Langley Fundamental Middle and Secondary School
Brooke Balharry - Langley Secondary School
Kari Stam - Credo Christian High School
Lexi Kowalewski - Aldergrove Community Secondary School
Makenna Gardner - Langley Christian School
Shannon Kao - R.E. Mountain Secondary School

The Swensson Award winner received a \$750 scholarship and the Flowerdew and Arnason Award recipients received \$750 to contribute to a recognized charity or society of their choice.

###

Media Inquiries:

For media inquiries on this or other Township of Langley topics, please submit your inquiry online at: tol.ca/mediainquiries.