

Six honoured with Paul Harris Fellow awards

Recognition is among the highest honours Rotary can bestow upon a person

By Gerald Tracey
News Editor

Eganville -- The Rotary Club of Eganville and area has honoured six members of the club and community with Paul Harris Fellow recognitions this year for their contributions to the club and the community.

This year's recipients are Carole Devine, Joe Conway, William and Margaret Matheson, Maria Robinson and Janet Reiche-Schoenfeldt. Coincidentally, both Ms. Robinson and Ms. Reiche-Schoenfeldt are members of North Algona Wilberforce Township council, but their recognitions have nothing to do with their political involvement, but rather their community involvement.

The Paul Harris Fellowship recognition is one of the highest honours Rotary can bestow upon a person. Recipients are Rotarians and community professionals, recognized for their outstanding contributions, exemplifying the highest ideal in Rotary in placing *"SERVICE ABOVE SELF."* This honour accompanies a donation of \$1,000 or more, in the recipient's name, to Rotary International's *"Annual Program Fund,"* which supports Rotary's world-wide programs. The recognition was established in 1957 to encourage and show appreciation for substan-

tial contributions to what was then the Foundation's only program, Rotary Foundation Fellowships for Advanced Study.

The recognition is named after Paul Percy Harris, a Chicago attorney who founded the club in 1905.

This year is the 75th anniversary of the granting of a charter to the Eganville club and although it was hoped the current members could celebrate the milestone in grand fashion, it was not possible due to concerns with COVID-19.

This year's honourees were recognized at a dinner at The Sands on Golden Lake on May 14. The recipients were introduced by Rotarian Dave Clark and presented with their recognitions by President Wayne Gorman.

Carole Devine

After retiring from a long and distinguished career in nursing, she joined the Rotary Club in 2011. Ms. Devine wanted to follow in the footsteps of her late father, Gerald Devine, who was a member of the Pembroke club and also a Paul Harris Fellow.

In introducing Ms. Devine, Rotarian Dave Clark said she remembers her dad coming home from an evening Rotary meeting and bringing ice cream treats for her.

"Service above self is in her DNA,"

he said. "Carole takes great satisfaction from giving her time and talent to the community."

With a primary focus of attracting and keeping healthcare services in the community, Ms. Devine is a member of the Connect-Well Health board and also on the board of the Eganville and Area Long-Term Care Corporation (Fairfields).

"Whether it be physician recruiting, sitting on the board of Connect-Well, or being at the round table for mental health procurement, Carole has been there for us," he said. "I have only scratched the surface on Carole's advocacy for healthcare in our community. She likes being that bridge between the community and the establishment, but only if she can do it without fanfare." Mr. Clark said it is Ms. Devine's energy, commitment and dedication to the well-being of the community as well as her Rotary commitment that welcomes her to the fellowship of the Paul Harris Society.

Joe Conway

Rotarian Joseph (Joe) Conway was also welcomed into the society. Known as a savvy businessman and pharmacist in the community for more than 35 years, Mr. Clark described him as a quiet and unassuming individual and a man of few words.

"He believes in *'live and let live'* while humbly trying to get the most out of every day," he said. "That is not always possible when working in the health field in a small community."

Marking his 50th anniversary in pharmacy this year, Mr. Clark said there are many difficult situations which Mr. Conway has to deal with on a weekly basis. When he took over the pharmacy in Eganville in 1983, like many businessmen of that time he joined Rotary and became very active in the community.

Active in club events such as the Canada Day breakfast or the frog jumping competition in years gone by, he also started the fledgling business association in Eganville and was chair of fundraising for the Eganville Centennial Committee which built Centennial Park in 1990-91.

A valued member of the club, Mr. Clark said Mr. Conway has done much for the community, both as a Rotarian and member of the business community.

"He is a very generous person," he said. "His advice is sage and his opinions valued. Joe takes great satisfaction in helping people as a healthcare professional in our community.

"Being a man of few words works well for Joe," he continued. "In his case, actions speak much louder than words. It is because of Joe's kindness and generosity and commitment to a healthy and safe community that we are proud to welcome him to the fellowship of the Paul Harris Society."

William and Margaret Matheson

The Mathesons retired to Eganville from Renfrew in 2005 and immediately became involved in the community, specifically with the Scouting movement.

"Usually, when people speak of retirement, they are talking about sitting back and taking things easy," Mr. Clark said. "Not so with this dynamic couple. When they settled in Eganville, they continued with the Scouting movement, a local movement that ended with COVID." Combined, the Mathesons have devoted over 50 years helping youth through Scouting, he said. That is how the partnership between the couple and Rotary evolved.

"Eganville Rotary had been the founding sponsor of 1st Eganville Scouts," he said. "Scouting needs funding and volunteers and Rotary provided the funds, and Bill and Marg the time and energy."

Mr. Clark said their volunteering doesn't end with Scouting. Over the years they have been instrumental in organizing and running the club's Canada Day Yard Sale and when COVID shut the event down for two years, they continued to run the sale from their own property.

"It is for Rotary and they enjoy yard sailing," he said. "They have a bottle and can collection depot at their home where proceeds are collected for the food bank. They also help at the Bonnechere Union Public Library when needed."

The Mathesons were made honorary members of the club as a tribute to their dedication and to the community.

"They take regular turns working at our charity bingo events," he continued. "They describe themselves as just simple people wanting to give back to the community."

Mr. Clark said the community and Rotary is all the better since the couple chose to retire in Eganville.

"For their generosity of time, kindness and living the Rotary motto: *Service Above Self*, we are pleased to welcome Bill and Marg Matheson into the fellowship of the Paul Harris Society."

Maria Robinson

Maria Robinson believes in the philosophy that whatever you do in life, the more you put in, the more you get out of it.

"Because of this ethos, applied to both work and volunteering, she is able to say *'life is good and I am thankful'*," Mr. Clark said.

Moving to the community from Oakville where she was involved on a library board and in a grass roots housing committee as well as being involved in a mentoring program at Sheridan College, Ms. Robinson quickly turned to volunteering in her new community.

"Our community is very fortunate that Maria chose to relocate in Eganville in 2012 with the purchase of Eagle Tax Services," Mr. Clark noted. "Once she settled into village

life, she again looked to help her new community."

Besides joining Rotary in 2016, Ms. Robinson is also a member of North Algona Wilberforce Township council and is the township's representative on the Bonnechere Union Public Library Board. She is also a member of the Eganville Community Development Group and sits on the board of the Eganville and District Seniors.

"In 2018 Maria visited an orphanage in Haiti as part of a charitable group she had been involved with in Oakville," Mr. Clark shared. "She is currently our club secretary of the Charitable Trust and our club's vice-president.

"Maria is one of those *'park your ego at the door, roll up your sleeves and get to work people'*. Her community involvement so typifies Rotary's motto: *Service Above Self*."

Janet Reiche-Schoenfeldt

Janet Reiche-Schoenfeldt spent all 30 years of her teaching career at Opeongo High School. In retirement, she was encouraged to run for council in North Algona Wilberforce Township where she continues to represent the community's interests and sits on several committees.

"What is special in Janet's award was her commitment to her students and her interaction with Rotary," Mr. Clark said. "She was available to Rotarian Richard Smerdon, who took charge of youth affairs in the club. When we needed candidates for the different adventure programs, it was Janet we turned to and she found the appropriate candidate." He said she always made special efforts to ensure her students made application to the bursaries offered for post-secondary education.

What really cemented Ms. Reiche-Schoenfeldt's nomination for the award, he said, was her tireless effort and encouragement with the Opeongo Interact Club and her drive to create and maintain school spirit.

"Janet is a true friend of Rotary," he said. "Because of Janet's dedication to our community and being that important bridge between Rotary and the youth, we are pleased to welcome her into the fellowship of the Paul Harris Society."



Rotary President Wayne Gorman, left, presented Paul Harris awards to six individuals recently while Rotarian Dave Clark, right, introduced the recipients and provided biographies on each one. Those honoured were Janet Reiche-Schoenfeldt, William and Margaret Matheson, Carole Devine, Joe Conway and Maria Robinson.