

'Mayor of Malton' named top citizen

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By CHRIS CLAY
Staff

They call her the Mayor of Malton. It's a well-deserved and appropriate nickname con-

sidering how active Helene Burrowes has been in the community since she moved to Malton in the late 1960s.

And, for her decades of volunteerism, activism and work to help the people of Malton, Burrowes has been named Mississauga's 2014 Citizen of the Year. She will receive the Gordon S. Shipp Memorial Award during a ceremony on Thursday at City Hall.



Helene Burrowes

Also receiving awards as part of the 2014 Civic Awards reception are Capt. Gary Dronyk and firefighters Dan Caccavo, Tom Haines and John Munn (Firefighter of the Year); Sgt. Paul Noonan (Police Merit Award); Peel Regional Police Const. Ben French (The Mississauga News Community Hero Award) and real estate agent Asha Singh (Ronald E. Sanderson Community Service Award).

The event, which is open to the public, starts at 4 p.m. Walter Hayde, past president of the Mississauga Real Estate Board, serves as emcee.

Burrowes, 75, said it was a total surprise to find out she was the winner considering she wasn't even aware she had been nominated.

"I was practically hyperventilating when I found out," said the affable Burrowes, a retired medical technologist. "I just couldn't believe it. My husband knew I had been nominated but he didn't say a word."

Her list of accomplishments and work in the community is long and impressive. She's the co-founder and former chair of the Malton Community Festival, sat on Malton Neighbourhood Services board of directors for six years, volunteers at Holy Cross Catholic Elementary School where she is heavily

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involved with the school's breakfast club and has been a member of the Rotary Club of Mississauga-Airport for a number of years.

"Helene Burrowes is one of those individuals of whom we often hear spoken but rarely see — an unsung hero," said Brian McGimpsey, a teacher at Lincoln Alexander Secondary School, in his letter of support for Burrowes' nomination.

But, that's not all.

She's been described as a driving force behind the Sai Dham Canada community kitchen in Malton. She also served as an advisory committee member with the Malton Community Building Project, which aims to provide leadership training,

programs and events for Malton's diverse communities.

That's just a smattering of Burrowes' accomplishments.

"In my 38 years serving the City (of Mississauga) as a community development coordinator, I have had the privilege to work with many of Mississauga's most outstanding volunteer community leaders, many of whom have been recognized with this prestigious award," said Russ Pooley, who gave her the nickname Mayor of Malton.

"I can say to you honestly, and without hesitation, that Helene Burrowes...ranks head-and-shoulders in community service above all of those with whom I have worked. She has done more for residents in

her beloved neighbourhood community of Malton than anyone, including even our beloved past Ward 5 City Councillor and Malton resident Frank McKechnie."

Over the years, Burrowes has been recognized with numerous awards including the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal, the Paul Harris Fellow award from the Rotary Club and the Woman of the Year Award from Punjabi Community Health Services in 2012. She also received a Civic Award of Recognition from the City of Mississauga in 2006.

Her interest in volunteerism started at a young age, right back when she was a Grade 1 student.

Her teacher asked the class to collect pennies they could send to Africa to help feed hungry children and Burrowes managed to collect 15 cents, the most out of the whole class.

"I remember I started to cry because my pennies were going to buy food for these poor kids," said Burrowes, her eyes welling up at the memory.

She's stayed in Malton ever since she first moved to Mississauga and calls it a little country unto itself. She said it's the sense of community that has kept her around for all those years and fondly remembers all the community events and barbecues that have helped forge that feeling of togetherness.