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Ontario says thanks to Neighborhood Centre founder

Community worker earns award

By STEPHANIE INNES
Staff Reporter

Dixie-Bloor Neighborhood Centre founder Donald Laughton has been lauded by the provincial government for his service to the community.

In an April 24 ceremony, the province's community and social services minister Zanana Akande presented Laughton with a ministry service award. The honor was one of 40 awarded to Ontarians who have demonstrated exceptional volunteer service within their communities.

Laughton was a member of the original steering committee that secured funding through the provincial government's CNSSP (Community Neighborhood Support Services Program) to make the Dixie-Bloor Neighborhood Centre a reality in the fall of 1987. He is currently serving as president of the centre's board of directors and an English as a Second Language (ESL) tutor.

His service to the community does not end at the east Mississauga neighborhood centre, however.

"Don has a long history of community service and an incredible understanding of this area," said Marianne Brueckert, executive director of the Dixie-Bloor Neighborhood Centre. "He is very aware of the needs in the community and has always been extremely adept at determining the kinds of programs and services required."

Brueckert nominated Laughton for the provincial award.

Laughton's community work goes back 50 years to when he was a youngster growing up on a Mississauga farm.

"Back then I learned you have to put your money where your mouth is and that if you thought something had to be done you had to go out and do it," he said of the philosophy that has since led him to lend a helping hand at Community Living Mississauga, Bethesda Concert Series, Canadian Autistic Society, Parkinson Foundation, Cancer Society, Heart and Stroke Foundation, the United Way, Bethesda United Church and the St. Luke's-Bethesda Refugee Committee.

In 1990, Laughton's contributions to the community were recognized with the Gordon S. Shipp Memorial Award and the honor of being

known as Mississauga's Citizen-Of-The-Year.

Laughton said he accepts the awards, "primarily to promote volunteerism.

"Volunteerism is a valuable commodity, and I think it's important to make people aware of it. Volunteerism is going out of vogue, and I think a lot of good things are suffering because of it.

"My horizons were so limited

until I got involved with people I wouldn't normally have come in contact with," he said. "I truly am the beneficiary of all my work."

Laughton, who balances his volunteer work with a job at North American Life in Toronto, said he would like to help implement more youth programs for children of new Canadians.

"We are sitting on a potential time bomb in Mississauga right

now," he said. "All teenagers feel alienated at some point, but it's even harder when the teenagers are fighting two cultures — there's more opportunity to fall through the cracks."

The only glitch in Laughton's life right now appears to be time. He said he would like to have two more days added to each week, but settles for rising at 4:30 a.m. everyday to get everything done.

