MUNICIPALITY of the COUNTY of KINGS

Volunteers Celebrated at 2026 Award Ceremony

Nov. 16, 2026

The Municipality of the County of Kings hosted a Volunteer Awards Celebration on Nov. 13 to recognize the many individuals and groups who give their time, energy, and care to make our communities stronger.

“I go to as many community events and initiatives as possible, and the one thing that is common amongst them is that they are always put on by an incredible group of volunteers,” said Mayor Dave Corkum in delivering opening remarks.

“Truly, volunteers are the backbone of Kings County.”

Mayor Corkum and Deputy Mayor Emily Lutz presented certificates of appreciation to the 2026 nominees before announcing the recipients of three annual awards recognizing overall years of service, variety of service, impact of service, and time committed to volunteerism.

Youth Volunteer of the Year Award – Grace Walsh



Grace Walsh has been an active member of 4-H for over 5 years and has made a strong contribution to both her club and the wider community. As secretary of the Western Kings 4-H Club, Junior Ambassador, and a member of the County Spirit Committee, Grace helps organize activities, supports fellow members, and promotes 4-H. She has volunteered with community service projects, fundraising events, Lions’ Club breakfasts, school craft fairs, and has even helped younger children at the rink. Grace’s enthusiasm, confidence, willingness to share her

skills, and dedication to helping others truly demonstrate the spirit of 4-H and make her a deserving volunteer.

Volunteer of the Year Award – Brian Hirtle



Brian is nominated by Berwick Curling Club. Brian has dedicated more than 25 years to volunteering in his community, with decades of leadership and hands-on involvement across many organizations. He has served as Chair of the Berwick and District Fire Commission for 35 years and currently chairs the Grand View Manor Board while also serving on its Foundation Board. He has volunteered with the Jr. A Wildcats for five years, helping with season tickets and sponsorships, and is active with the Berwick Curling Club through its Board, Finance Committee, stick curling leagues, events, and other activities. Brian also supports community fundraising events, chairs the Burlington cemetery committee, and volunteers at the annual Burlington Canada Day Celebration.

Ted Meldrum Award – Muriel West



Muriel has dedicated an incredible 50 years to volunteering in Kingston, Greenwood, and the surrounding area. Her contributions have included Kingston & Area Scouting, school fundraising, the Heart & Stroke Campaign, North Kingston Cemetery, Canadian Blood Services, and the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, where she now prepares about 50 tax returns each year. She has served for nine years on the Kingston Village Commission, six years as Treasurer of the Association of Nova Scotia Villages, and in numerous roles with local churches and community events. Muriel has also helped with physician recruitment, organized community clean-ups and appreciation initiatives, and co-chaired fundraising and planning for the new Kingston library. A dedicated leader who often initiates new ideas and events, Muriel's 50 years of service have made a lasting impact on the community.

Thank you to the 2026 Volunteer Award Nominees:

Brayden Williams – Nominated for Volunteer of the Year for his contributions to The Stockings Were Hung Project and his wider community involvement

Brayden has volunteered for 4 years and stepped up this year to dedicate extra time to the Stockings Were Hung Project, working alongside other youth and helping with cleanup before and after the holidays. He is actively involved in school and community activities, taking on leadership roles, supporting student government, organizing sports and events, helping plan graduation, and running the Unified Basketball program. He also contributes to the yearbook and spirit committee and volunteers at community events such as seniors' dinners and holiday drives. Brayden's willingness to step forward, encourage others, and help wherever needed demonstrates strong leadership and a sincere commitment to his community.

Leah Newcombe – Youth Volunteer of the Year Nominee



Leah has dedicated 6 years to volunteering with 4-H and has taken on many leadership roles at both the club and county levels. She has served as President of the Kings County 4-H Council and President of the Western Kings 4-H Club, chaired Joint Achievement Days, helped organize recreation events and school visits to promote 4-H, and contributed to numerous community service projects. Outside of 4-H, Leah has volunteered in her school community, served on the Holstein Canada Young Leader Advisory Committee for Atlantic Canada, and is a member of the DAL AC judging team. Her leadership, commitment, and many hours of service have made a valuable contribution to 4-H and her community.

Cecil Brown – Nominated by Scouts Canada



Cecil has dedicated 35 years to volunteering. Cecil has served in various positions in Scouts Canada, from Cub Leader at Sunken Lake Camp to Committee Chair. He spends many hours assisting and mentoring groups across the Valley, planning youth events, camping trips, fundraising, and even providing service at the National Jamboree. He freely gives his time and is an amazing mentor for youth and adults alike. The energy and time this gentleman spends on the youth in our community is commendable.

Peter Rigby – Nominated by Scouts Canada



Peter "Chatter" Rigby has dedicated more than 30 years to the 2nd Berwick Scout Group, mentoring generations of youth, particularly through the Beaver Colony. He has supported countless camps, activities, and adventures, helping create meaningful experiences for young people. His service has been recognized with numerous Scouting honours, including the Medal for Good Service and the Long Service Medal. Outside of Scouting, Peter has volunteered with Berwick Legion Branch 069 for the past 12 years, serving in several leadership roles and supporting the cadet squadron and community events. His decades of service have made a lasting impact on youth and the wider community.

Debbie Surette – Nominated by the Royal Canadian Legion



Debbie has dedicated 6 years to volunteering with the Legion, where she plays a pivotal role on the Executive. She is instrumental in the Poppy Fund, manages Chase the Ace, handles public relations, organizes Paint Night fundraisers, and volunteers at Legion events. Her community service also includes being a former Brownie Leader, coaching T-ball, canvassing for the Canadian Cancer Society, and supporting nonprofit initiatives. Always willing to lend a hand or serve on a committee, Debbie is a valued asset to the Legion and the wider community.

Teressa VanOostrum – Nominated by 4-H



Teressa has led the Building Blocks project and organized local and provincial building and woodworking competitions. She supports 4-H Council, community service projects, fundraising, and Joint Achievement Days, and currently serves as Treasurer of the Kings County 4-H Council while sitting on several provincial committees. She also volunteers as a lead

with pickleball groups in the Kentville area and has supported the Community Income Tax Program for the past 9 years. Teressa's thoughtful leadership and commitment to making learning fun have enriched the 4-H experience for many young people.

Jeremy LeBlanc – Nominated by Scouts Canada

Jeremy has dedicated 4 years to volunteering with 2nd Berwick Scouts, consistently going above and beyond to provide youth with active, engaging, and meaningful Scouting experiences. He regularly attends camps and events, transports equipment in his own vehicle, and takes youth camping throughout Nova Scotia, giving them opportunities to explore new places while building confidence, skills, and lasting memories. His kindness, enthusiasm, and genuine care ensure every youth feels included and encouraged. Jeremy is more than a leader—he is a role model, mentor, and, affectionately, "Jeremy Twinkle Toes."

Deon MacKenzie – Nominated by Scouts Canada

Deon has dedicated over 8 years to volunteering with 2nd Berwick Scouts, building on his own lifelong involvement in Scouting and continuing the family tradition with his daughter. He is a hands-on leader who helps youth develop outdoor skills such as knot-tying and safe whittling, with a strong focus on safety, responsibility, and confidence. Deon has also transformed part of his property into "Camp MacKenzie," giving youth a unique space to camp, build shelters, and develop practical outdoor skills. His dedication and passion have created meaningful experiences for youth and made a lasting contribution to the Scouting community. Deon proudly carries the Scouting name "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi."

Mick Tanner – Nominated by Village of New Minas



Mick has dedicated countless hours to coaching and supporting youth basketball, demonstrating a strong commitment to both boys and girls in our community. This past year, he coached the Evangeline Middle School boys' and girls' teams and multiple teams with the Axe Basketball Club, including U12 Girls, U10 Boys, and U14 Boys. He also volunteered as an assistant coach with the U8 "Lil Hatchets," helping introduce the youngest players to the fundamentals of basketball in a positive and encouraging environment. His continued dedication has made a valuable contribution to youth basketball in our community. He was also recognized as the Village of New Minas Volunteer of the Year at the provincial awards ceremony.

Mark Albano – Nominated by Filipino-Canadians in the Valley Association



Mark has been volunteering with the Association since it was formally registered one year ago, helping organize cultural celebrations and community gatherings that bring people together and create a sense of belonging. He gives his time and energy because of his deep love for the community, helping promote Filipino culture and strengthen connections between Filipino and Canadian communities in the Valley. His compassion, dedication, and willingness to give his time make a meaningful difference to those around him.

Johannes Wheeldon – Nominated for service to the Canning & District Recreation Commission



Johannes has dedicated 2 years to volunteering and was the driving force behind the Ice Breakers hockey program at the Glooscap District Arena. He identified a need for a low-cost, low-pressure, and fun way for children and families to try hockey and has led the program's development from the beginning. Through his leadership, Johannes has helped reduce barriers related to cost, travel, and confidence while creating a welcoming environment where children can build skills and confidence. His vision, passion, and dedication have strengthened recreation opportunities for youth and families in the rural community.

Darrell Steel – Nominated for contributions to the Canning & District Recreation Commission

Darrell has dedicated 2 years to volunteering with the Ice Breakers hockey program at the Glooscap District Arena. As the program has grown, he has stepped up to run his own team, helping expand the program and ensure more children can participate. Through his leadership, Darrell creates a positive, supportive, and fun environment where youth can build confidence, develop hockey skills, and enjoy sport. His dedication and reliability have made him an important part of the program's growth and success.

Sandy Wing, Amanda Cress and Laura White – Nominated by the Include Me Society



Since 2023, **Sandy, Amanda, and Laura** have dedicated hundreds of volunteer hours to providing recreational and social opportunities for neurodivergent children, teens, adults, and their families in the Annapolis Valley. What began as a conversation about gaps in services has grown into a vital community organization that has hosted more than 150 adapted events and programs. In 2025 alone, Include Me hosted more than 100 events, including 74 in Kings County, reaching more than 2,000 participants. Through their dedication and advocacy, they have created opportunities ranging from adapted arts and swimming to sports, movies, family events, and outings. Their passion and commitment have helped create a more inclusive community and made a meaningful difference in the lives of many families.

Beverly Palmeter – Nominated by Kings County 4-H Council



Beverly has dedicated 25 years to volunteering with 4-H, serving as a County Leader Adviser and General Leader of the Horton 4-H Club. She has mentored 4-H members, supported fundraising and grant applications, served on numerous committees, and played an important role with the County Awards Committee, as well as the 4-H Nova Scotia Provincial Show and Sheep Committees. Outside of 4-H, Beverly continues to serve her community through leadership roles with Landscape of Grand Pré Inc., the Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia, the Canadian Sheep Federation, and the Grand Pré Marsh Body. Her longstanding commitment and leadership have made a valuable contribution to 4-H and the wider community.

Tara Hirtle – Nominated by 4-H



Tara has dedicated 15 years to volunteering with 4-H as a Horse Leader, organizing the Light Horse project at the county level, including shows, clinics, and judging. She also helps organize regional Light Horse Boot Camps and serves on committees for the Tug-o-War team and Lumbersports competitions. Tara was part of the 4-H Nova Scotia 100th Anniversary Committee and attended the 4-H Canada Leadership Summit. Outside of 4-H, she also volunteers at the horse show at the Tremont Fair.

Melina Param – Nominated by the Village of Canning



Melina has volunteered for two and a half years and quietly strengthens the community through her involvement with several local organizations. She is an active member of the Rotary Club of Kentville, supports the care and rehabilitation of injured animals through Hope for Wildlife, and contributes to Ross Creek Centre for the Arts, including the monthly community suppers. Through Volunteer Nova Scotia, she also serves on the board and helps support and promote volunteerism across the province. Melina is a reliable and generous volunteer who gives her time simply because she cares, making a positive impact across many areas of the community.