

MEDIA RELEASE

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Two area Leaders recognized for Economic Impact

Community-building champions Cathy Sheppard and Ken Watson are this year's recipients of the Bill Thake Memorial Economic Development Leadership Award.

The winners were announced today at the 13th annual United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Economic Development Summit held virtually via live webcam. Cathy is a resident of the Municipality of North Grenville and Ken is from the Township of Rideau Lakes.

"Both individuals have shown outstanding commitment to improving and developing their communities," said Warden Roger Haley.

"We are proud to honour them, and all of our deserving nominees, for the major contributions they continue to make," the Warden said.

This is the 11th year the Bill Thake Memorial Award, also called the Warden's Award, and has been presented to community volunteers showing economic leadership in Leeds Grenville.

Winner Cathy Sheppard founded Sheppard and Associates 37 years ago. Throughout those years she became active in a number of community initiatives and committees, including Kemptville District Hospital, the Youth Centre, Jumpstart, Kemptville Women in Business and the North Grenville Chamber of Commerce, to name only a few. Cathy sold her bookkeeping business and retired earlier this year but continues her far-reaching community leadership. Most recently she has joined a team of volunteers to present the International Plowing Match in North Grenville in 2022. One of her passions is mentoring new entrepreneurs.

"I'm very grateful. I have always been motivated to give back," Cathy said after the awards were announced.

Winner Ken Watson is well known for his decades of work in promoting the Old Stone Mill in Delta, the Rideau Canal and the Township of Rideau Lakes. Working quietly behind the scenes, Ken is responsible for attracting thousands of people to the region over the years through his Rideau Canal information website, his stunning promotional photography, his extensive knowledge of local history and his many publications on driving, cycling and paddling in the Rideau Lakes area.

"Volunteering is really satisfying," Ken said. I like to showcase two of our most spectacular local heritage sites to the world."

Also applauded for his leadership was nominee David Cybulski, from the Township of Augusta. David created the Maitland Garden of Hope with his wife Colleen and is co-founder of the award-winning 1000 Islands and Rideau Canal Garden Trail.

Brothers Silvan and Yulrick Fernetich, of the Township of Leeds and the Thousands Islands and co-owners of Lansdowne Freshmart, were jointly recognized for their continued support of youth employment, tourism, culture, recreation and heritage preservation in the township.

Since being introduced in 2011, the award has been given to 16 individuals from across Leeds Grenville. A total of 42 deserving women and men have been nominated. Last year's recipients were Janet Campbell, a community builder and founder of Mrs. McGarrigle's in Merrickville, and Wendy Merkle, a community champion in the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands and co-owner of Andress Boatworks in Rockport.

During his lifetime, Bill Thake was known for his leadership and mentoring skills. He served 52 consecutive years on Westport Council to set a Canada-wide record as the longest serving head of a municipality.

The summit is hosted by the Counties Economic Development Office in partnership with Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes MP Michael Barrett, MPP Steve

Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 1000 Islands, Valley Heartland and Grenville Community Futures Development Corporations, and the Eastern Workforce Innovation Board.

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