

Bill Thake Memorial Award for Economic Development Leadership

Nominee Biographies: November 18, 2022



JoAnne Sytsma | Village of Athens



JoAnne demonstrates an effortless ability to inspire and motivate others to her level of community participation. She is known for her giving nature and is a proven leader with her long-term commitments to organizations and charities. JoAnne continues to be involved with the Brockville & Area Food Bank and her name is synonymous with local food drives in Leeds Grenville. She has also been active with Climb for Care, Girls Inc. of Upper Canada, Career Services of Brockville, Brockville Power & Sail Squadron, the Care & Share Golf Committee, Feed Ontario, 100 Women Who Care 1000 Islands, and Our Kenyan Kids. JoAnne earned the Brockville Citizen of the Year Award in 2021. She was treasurer of the Auxiliary Volunteer Program at St. Lawrence Lodge and Scholarship Committee Chair for the Brockville Women's Network.

JoAnne and her late husband, Sid, created The Village Store in Athens and transformed it into an attractive downtown hub for residents and tourists. She was also owner of Dedicated Shunting Services for more than 24 years. JoAnne is described as a champion for the entire region, making Leeds Grenville a better place to live and do business. Her nomination is endorsed by Athens Township Council.

Derek Ouellet | Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands



Derek is a champion for economic development in the Seeley's Bay community. He retired to the area 10 years ago but soon opened Ridgway Confections, a superb chocolate shop that has become a destination for residents and tourists alike. Derek is very proud of his products. At the same time, he is an energetic ambassador for the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands, including appearing in a promotional video series called "Grow Your Business, Love our Lifestyle." Derek's success has been a model to other entrepreneurs and demonstrates how a business can find creative ways to give back to the community.

Derek and his wife, Cindy Healy, launched the annual Easter Egg Hunt to entice residents and families to explore area parks, the main street and other community gems. Both triathletes, they created and are the driving force behind the annual Truffle Shuffle 5K walk/run, now in its 8th year. Proceeds are donated to the local food bank. Derek provides audio visual support to the Area Residents' Association (SBARA) for their events. Derek's nomination is endorsed by the Leeds and the Thousand Islands Council and Economic Development Committee.

Dermid O'Farrell | Municipality of North Grenville



Dermid is a community leader who is passionate about North Grenville. He was named the North Grenville Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year in 2011 and the Harry Spratt Ambassador of the Year in 2017. Dermid is President and Managing Partner of O'Farrell Financial Services Inc., a company he and his wife Donna Lee founded in 1997. He has been an active volunteer and board member with many local organizations for more than 25 years, including the Chamber of Commerce, Grenville Community Futures Development Corporation and the Economic Development Advisory Committee.

Dermid was president of the Kemptville District Hospital Foundation and sat on the Board of Directors for the Ryan's Well Foundation. He was Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus Kemptville Chapter and founded the annual Columbus Sweetheart Brunch, now in its 20th year. Dermid was appointed to the Kemptville Campus Board of Directors last year and is currently chair. He served as Chair of the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo 2022 Local Exhibitors Committee. Dermid's nomination is endorsed by North Grenville's Council and Community and Economic Development Advisory Committee.

Susan Warren | Township of Rideau Lakes



Susan (Sue) works tirelessly behind the scenes to make the rich history and genealogy of Rideau Lakes accessible to everyone interested in ancestry. For more than 42 years, she has volunteered her time protecting documents and archives while promoting the township's historical significance through books and films. Sue is an accomplished author and retired librarian who has been at the forefront of the digitization movement to ensure visitors and future generations can see archives and other important documents about Rideau Lakes.

The more information online about a place, the more likely people are to visit it. As chair of the Rideau Lakes Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee, Sue was instrumental in reaching larger audiences via a series of documentary films on the Rideau Canal's construction and intriguing history. She's an active member of the Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society; Elgin and Area Heritage Society; Friends of the Rideau; and the Leeds & Grenville Branch, Ontario Genealogical Society. Sue is passionate about bringing visitors to the region to explore its history. Her nomination is endorsed by Rideau Lakes Township Council.

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Today we are presenting the award, but the time to start thinking of nominees for next year starts right now! Do you know a leader in your community who is deserving of this esteemed award? There are many volunteers helping improve our Leeds Grenville communities and we would like to honour them for their ongoing efforts. If you know someone who should be nominated, please let us know and we will include you in our contact list when we call for nominations. Connect with us at econdev@uclg.on.ca or call Deanna Clark at 613-342-3840, ext. 5360

Timeline to plan your nomination:

Starting now ... Let us know if you have someone in mind. We will start a list of potential nominees and provide you with early reminders of the nomination process and deadline.

April/May/June: If you don't already have a person in mind, discuss potential nominees at Economic Development Committee meetings and with business community improvement groups.

Early August: Nominations are open and notification will appear in the *Leeds Grenville Economic Development eNewsletter*, along with a link to an online nomination form.

September: Seek Council endorsement of your nominee at regularly scheduled meetings during the month.

Late September: Deadline to submit your nomination. Letters of reference can accompany the nomination as well as Council endorsement.

November: The winner will be announced at the Economic Development Summit.

Thank you for taking the time to help us acknowledge volunteers who show outstanding leadership resulting in the growth and vitality of the Leeds Grenville economy.