



REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: January 30, 2023

FROM: Community Services Commission

DATE: January 17, 2023

SUBJECT: **Community Spirit Awards Update**

LOCATION: Town-wide

WARD: Town-wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the 2023 Community Spirit Awards Update report be received.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Oakville Community Spirit Awards (CSA) celebrate community champions who positively contribute to the quality of life of Oakville residents.
- CSA celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts in October 2021 (two years recognized at one event due to COVID-19-related challenges). Historically, the event is hosted in June.
- The CSA Selection Committee recommended that the CSA Organizing Committee review opportunities to revamp the program and refresh the awards (categories, event format, and community engagement).
- A survey was launched in September 2022 seeking public input on award categories, event format and preferred recognition types.
- In addition to volunteerism, survey feedback revealed that recognizing kindness and inspiration were important to respondents, as well as diversity, inclusion, and climate action.
- Responses revealed that Oakville is evolving and that the awards should be both inspirational and celebratory with broader award categories for a larger reach

BACKGROUND:

Since 2002, the CSA has recognized individual and groups for their outstanding contributions to the community. Each year, an awards event is held in June to honour community champions who go above and beyond in our community. In 2021, the CSA celebrated its 20th anniversary with a successful hybrid event and combined community champion recognition for 2019 and 2020. In years past, the event was held in June, however due to the ongoing pandemic and gathering restrictions at the time, the 2021 event was scheduled for October to accommodate a hybrid celebration.

When the CSA Organizing Committee regrouped after the October 2021 event, it was noted that a 2022 event may be challenging if it were to return as a June event again. Timing would be too close to the last event in October 2021 and there could be nominator fatigue. The CSA Selection Committee also provided valuable feedback after the 20th CSA and made recommendations to review opportunities that could revamp the program and re-energize the awards (categories, event format, and community engagement). Given this feedback and COVID-19 impacts over the past two years, the committee recommended that the 2022 event be postponed to re-evaluate and revamp the program for 2023.

AWARDS VISION:

To celebrate individuals, not-for-profit organizations, social enterprises and businesses who positively contribute to the quality of life of Oakville residents. Oakville's Community Spirit Awards inspire and encourage residents and stakeholders from all walks of life to make a difference in their community through volunteer efforts or acts of kindness.

This aligns with one of Council's key area of focus — Engaged Community: Foster a community environment that engages residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

ENGAGEMENT TO INCREASE NOMINATIONS

The CSA Organizing Committee has expanded to include active representation from each commission to manage the category that best supports their business goals and objectives. Commission/departments will be responsible for seeking credible and deserving nominations by reaching out to their respective networks.

Other opportunities include expanding Committee representation to include external partners including OPL, Volunteer Halton, Oakville Arts Council, YMCA, Historical Society, etc. without duplicating effort.

The community is encouraged to nominate youth, adults and seniors in the award category that best recognizes their impact or benefit to the community.

REFRESHED AWARD CATEGORIES

Survey feedback revealed that recognizing kindness and inspiration was very meaningful to the community in an awards program. Comments indicated that the award categories should be more inspirational and celebratory.

Based on that feedback, the CSA award categories have been refreshed to expand community reach and to recognize both volunteerism and acts of kindness. In addition, the Youth and Seniors awards were removed to encourage submissions from all age demographics based on merit in the category that best reflects their impact on the community. Age demographics will be collected on the revamped and more user-friendly online nomination form. The Selection Committee reserves the right to award more than one winner per category.

Previous award categories have been captured in the new categories (arts, heritage, and access) and now individuals and groups will be nominated in the award category that best recognizes their impact or benefit to the community versus their size.

- 1. Arts, Culture & Heritage Award:** Recognizes outstanding individuals, businesses or organizations who have made a significant voluntary contribution to the artistic and/or cultural community of the Town of Oakville through the development, support, conservation or promotion of local heritage, culture, music, visual, performing or literary arts.
- 2. Climate Action Award:** Recognizes outstanding individuals, businesses or organizations who have demonstrated environmental leadership by making significant voluntary contributions to the sustainability, protection, conservation, or beautification of Oakville's natural and built environments.
- 3. Good Neighbour Award:** Recognizes outstanding individuals, businesses or organizations who have made significant contributions in their neighbourhood by showing kindness, instilling community pride, or ensuring public safety to make Oakville a better place to live, work and play.
- 4. Inclusion, Diversity, Equity & Accessibility Award:** Recognizes outstanding individuals, businesses or organizations who have made significant voluntary contribution, beyond legislated requirements, to make Oakville a more inclusive community regardless of visible/invisible disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, income, etc.
- 5. Inspiration Award:** Recognizes outstanding individuals, businesses or organizations who advocate for others, motivate the community, or have had an inspirational influence on others.

- 6. Leadership & Innovation Award:** Recognizes outstanding individuals, businesses or organizations who exemplify leadership or innovation, and inspire others to work collaboratively and respectfully to enhance the quality of life of others.

Previous award categories: Access Award, Arts Award, Group Volunteer Award, Heritage Award, Individual Volunteer Award, Seniors Award and Youth Award

JUDGING RUBRIC

The CSA Organizing Committee developed a weighted judging rubric to help determine top recipients. Nominations that do not meet award requirements will be considered incomplete.

The Selection Committee will mark nominations based on the following:

1. Demonstrate one or more town core values (accountability, dedication, honesty, innovation, respect, teamwork).
2. Address a challenge or identify a priority in the Oakville community, as it relates to the award category.
3. Provide specific examples that demonstrate how the person/organization has made a significant impact/positive benefit in the community through their actions and activities.

Detailed submission guidelines, award categories and sample scoresheets will be posted to the Community Spirit Awards web page.

RECOGNITION:

According to the survey results and consistent with previous CSA celebrations, the preferred type of recognition was an official announcement and in-person awards ceremony. More than 50 per cent of respondents felt that the program should be offered for free or pay-what-you-can (previous awards charged \$15-20 per ticket).

Survey respondents preferred a personal award, followed closely by permanent recognition. In the past, the CSA Organizing Committee commissioned a local artist to create the awards. In addition to these personal awards, one larger art piece will be commissioned as a permanent piece in the corporate art collection. CSA winner names will be added to the piece of art so that recipients are recognized for years to come.

BUDGET

The CSA Organizing Committee recommends continuing with an in-person awards celebration including light refreshments and décor. Since the event will transition to pay-what-you-can and will recognize 2 years of recipients, additional funds may be

required to cover event costs. The annual net budget for the Community Spirit Awards program is \$7,200; however, any additional costs will be covered within the overall Recreation budget.

Sponsorships are available for award categories and contribute to the overall budget of the event, which are considered in the annual budget.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:

The refreshed awards focuses on what matters most to our community. It will be more inclusive and reach a broader audience thanks to feedback received from the public about how they want to be recognized and celebrated, and adjustments made at the committee level to ensure representation from across the town.

Based on feedback, the CSA award categories have been updated and expanded to celebrate volunteers as well as those who have positively impacted Oakville by acts of kindness, activism, and spirit

It is recommended that Council receive this report and that the event return in June 2023 with an in-person celebration at Queen Elizabeth Park Community and Cultural Centre.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

N/A

(B) FINANCIAL

Any overages beyond the budgeted amount of \$7,200, as a result of celebrating a two year program, will be covered within the overall Recreation budget.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

N/A

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal(s) to:

- Be the most livable town in Canada.
- Foster a community environment that engages residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

The 2023 Community Spirit Awards will now recognize outstanding individuals, businesses or organizations who have demonstrated environmental leadership

by making significant voluntary contributions to the sustainability, protection, conservation, or beautification of Oakville's natural and built environments.

Prepared by:
Community Spirit Awards Organizing Committee

Submitted by:
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