

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR: Kids' champion, Don MacVicar



RON ALBERTSON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Citizen of the Year Don MacVicar was inspired to help troubled youth by a line in his favourite film *Boys Town*, which goes: 'There's no such thing as a bad boy.'

Bill Sturupp, Sabrina Pursley also honoured

BY DANIEL NOLAN

A man deemed "The Quiet Hero" for working behind the scenes on such projects as turning the former Robert Land School into a north end community centre is 2006 Citizen of the Year.

Don MacVicar, 50, who founded the Wentworth Street Mission two decades ago with his wife Carole, was selected for the Royal Bank award at

the Chamber of Commerce-organized banquet last night at Liuna Station.

More than 400 were on hand to hear MacVicar, who has worked with underprivileged children for 25 years, chosen over five other contenders: community volunteers Dr. Nathalie Xian Yi Yan, Dr. John Frid and Dr. Carl J. Turkstra, education director Chris Spence and Morteza Jafarpour, head of Settlement and Integration Services.

"I'm so deeply moved to be nominated," MacVicar said, adding he had been inspired to help troubled youth by his favourite film *Boys Town* and its line "There's no such thing as a bad boy."

MacVicar is a recipient of the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award, and he and his wife were awarded the 2004 Canada YMCA Peace Medal.

Winner of The Hamilton Spectator Youth Volunteer of the Year Award was

Sabrina Pursley, of Ryerson Middle School. She went from being a patient at McMaster Children's Hospital to running a walk-a-thon for the hospital.

The late legendary CHML radio reporter and volunteer Bill Sturupp won The Spec's Community Service Award. dnolan@thespec.com

905-526-3351

▶ **RELATED STORY: A10**

LOCAL

Top citizen
dreams big

Parents taught him to 'give back'

BY BILL DUNPHY

When Don MacVicar casts an eye over his fellow nominees for the 2006 Royal Bank Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award, he can't help but voice his admiration.

Chris Spence, Carl Turkstra, Morteza Jafarpour, Nathalie Xian Yi Yan, Dr. John Frid ... and then there's Don, the North End kid, a kind of cast-off from the Cape Breton coal mines.

"It's a stellar group there," Don says. "An amazing group of people, they've done great things for this city."



MacVicar

That they have. And so too has the kid who stopped growing before he hit five feet, but never stopped dreaming big.

Don MacVicar, co-founder — with wife Carole — of the Inner City Outreach Ministry and chair of the Robert Land Community Association, has done great big things for the city, by looking after the little things — the daily lives of his inner city neighbours and their kids. And for that, last night at Liuna Station in front of several hundred fellow citizens, he was named the 2006 citizen of the year.

Don's 50 now, been with Dofasco for more than a quarter of a century. He was born in the coal-mining town of Donkin, Nova Scotia. But poverty chased his family out of the mines and clear across the country in search of work. Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and finally Hamilton's north end, where the MacVicars put down roots and somehow found nourishment amid the scrapyards and the foundries.

"I guess people were kind and generous to me and my family. So, when you get a bit extra in your life, you want to share it, to give a bit back — my mom and dad were always like that," he says.

The lesson was taught very early, Don says, recalling a church Christmas hamper that saved the holidays for the family before they got to Hamilton.

He remembers as a teen how his older brother Jim would save his tips from his busboy job at the Connaught and buy a pizza to share with his brothers.

And then, if he had the \$7 it took, he'd rent the outdoor ice at Eastwood Park for an hour on the weekend and they'd invite all the neighbourhood kids down for a glorious game of shinny.

For that hour those kids enjoyed what many kids today take for granted.

Recent Citizen
of the Year winners

2005: McMaster University professor Dr. Gary Warner, who is known for promoting peace and was named to the Order of Canada the same year.

2004: Ray Johnson of Ancaster (died in 2005), who was a former CFL football player who worked with youths in sports at McMaster University for decades and numerous civic groups.

2003: Philanthropist Neil McArthur, who has given donations to McMaster University, the Good Shepherd Centre and Hamilton Health Sciences.

2002: Former Stelco executive Bob Jones, who has been active in the United Way and numerous other organizations.

2001: CH-TV anchor Dan McLean, who is called Mr. Hamilton by some for his work in helping numerous community organizations and events over the last few decades.

The Hamilton Spectator

Decades later, Don has devoted himself to continuing that work — and more.

About 20 years ago, he and Carol started Inner City Outreach Ministry at St. David's Presbyterian, in his old neighbourhood. They offered an alternative to drugs, crime or boredom. They offered summer camp and winter sports, games and recreation, snacks and most importantly, a solid, non-judgmental presence in kids' lives.

More recently, he moved from wiping tears and filling stomachs to building networks and finding funders as chair of the much admired Robert Land Community Association, a group that bought and re-opened the neighbourhood school as a community centre after the board closed it. Now a whole range of services are moving in, and Don and his board are busy building a solid financial future for the facility.

But for Don it's still all about the kids. "The joy of seeing a kid sink a basket, grab a cookie, fill his stomach — saying 'Thanks, sir!' as they go, knowing they can come back, knowing there's some fun here ... If I could do this the rest of my life, until my last breath on Earth, that would be the dream come true."

bdunphy@thespec.com
905-526-3262