



Unsung Hero Service Award Recipients 2024

Our first recipient is **Leo Deloyde**, being recognized as an unsung hero for his invaluable volunteerism with the North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre, going above and beyond what is expected. Over the past five years, Leo has dedicated countless hours of his time and experience as an urban planning professional, playing a key role in the concept, development, and project management of Suswin House, North Bay's first major response to the homelessness crisis. A 30-unit transitional housing building, Suswin House delivers wraparound services for homeless Indigenous men, who comprise an estimated 44 per cent of the city's homeless population. Suswin has recently completed its first year of successful operations, providing a "nest" for Indigenous men who participate in programs designed to support their integration into employment and a stable community life.

To make Suswin House a reality, Leo helped The North Bay Indigenous Friendship Centre navigate a number of challenges, such as ongoing and continuous funding and construction delays due to strikes, the COVID pandemic and increased material costs. The Centre is forever grateful for Leo's endless and selfless dedication and leadership to the Suswin House project, as well as the Miskwaadesi cultural learning site on the Chippewa Creek Eco Path.

Mark and Leslie Lyons' unwavering commitment to supporting children with autism spectrum disorder and their families has made a profound and positive impact on both clients at One Kids Place and the broader community. Mark and Leslie's son, Jack, had ASD and it soon became apparent to them that resources were not readily accessible or available and they set out to do something about it. Sadly, Jack passed away, but his parents' desire to celebrate his legacy continues to this day.

Mark's dedication, with his wife Leslie by his side, is unmistakable in every aspect of his involvement with One Kids Place. He generously donates his time, energy, and resource to make a significant difference, consistently going above and beyond to support events, provide one-on-one assistance to families, and educate the community. His tireless efforts ensure that children and families affected by ASD receive the care, support, and resources they need to thrive. One of Mark's most remarkable contributions to One Kids Place is his steadfast support of the Jack Lyons Playground, a sensory-based space designed to enhance the lives of children and families.

One Kids Place is deeply grateful for everything Mark and Leslie do and their tireless dedication to creating meaningful change. They embody the true spirit of community heroes.

Without **Peggy Morrison's** vision and leadership, the Open Arms Café may never have opened its doors. Upon retirement in 2012, Peggy started an outreach program for the homeless, called Out of the Cold, and she soon became aware that no meals were being provided for them in North Bay on Wednesday evenings. She did something about it. She recruited a group of volunteers at the St. John the Divine Church and in the winter of 2013, they started providing healthy, hot meals for the homeless on a weekly basis.

Spring came along, and although the need to stay out of the cold was no longer, Peggy recognized the need not only for food but also for ongoing socializing. So, she sought out a chef who wanted to give back to the community and The Open Arms Café was born. The name came about after a client said there were very few places in the city that open their doors with such open arms. Now, more than 11 years later, up to 160 people a week visit the Open Arms Café and Peggy continues to coordinate the meals, recruit volunteers, do public awareness, do fund raising, and most importantly, to touch the lives of hundreds of disadvantaged individuals. She truly reflects Rotary's motto "Service above self".

Our last award is being awarded posthumously. **Bryan Eade** was a strong advocate for the people who experience homelessness in North Bay and those who are marginalized, both through work and volunteering. He became a close ally with the Compassionate Committee for the Homeless in North Bay, participating in their "See the Person" campaign, which puts faces to homelessness, aiming to change the negative narrative attached to the issue. He had the courage to share his story as a person with lived experience who, at one point, himself was homeless.

Bryan also advocated on the national level. Last fall, he represented the Nipissing District at the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness Convention, sharing what this district is doing to end the stigma about homelessness. And Bryan's video "See the Person", was recently shared with the Director General of Infrastructure Canada. She remarked on the video's impact, stating that "every person on the planet should see it".

Bryan passed away in June. People who knew him considered him to be a very compassionate, hardworking, sensitive individual who valued each person through his service with the Warming Centre, the Healthy Community Ambassador Program, the Gathering Place, and Boots on the Ground, and as an anti-stigma advocate, all through acts of unselfish kindness. Bryan's mark on the North Bay community can be felt not only by those who have been served, but also those who continue to serve the marginalized. Bryan truly was an Unsung Hero.

Bryan's partner, Maddie Sexton, will accept this award on his behalf.