

Walter P. Willms Award Speech – Mike Drake, July 16th, 2018

I have the great fortune of being able to talk about Walter today to introduce our 3rd annual award:

Walter would you please come up to the front and perhaps past president Colleen could go down and join him.

As Rotarians, we take great pride in the fact that no one individual stands above another in our desire to put service above self and help make the world a greater place.

There are so many of our Club members who do so much with little or no recognition from our peers. Today is an opportunity for us to reflect on those Rotarians and honour those in our Club who are living examples of our service organization's great motto - Service Above Self.

One of the greatest honour in my year as your Club president was the start of Young Rotary Leaders in our Club and to be able to announce the presentation of the Walter P. Willms New Rotarian Leader award in 2016 which was started to recognize a member who exemplifies the qualities of our Walter.

I know I speak for the entire executive at the time from the Club with the joy we felt when we surprised Walter with this announcement on a cold winter early Friday morning at our meeting at the Safety Village.

Walter sat silently with tears building up in his eyes when we announced this to him and it filled ours also. We are very fortunate to have someone of Walter's character, determination and dedicated service in our club.

He is always willing to help as needed. From work in the office, to setting up at our meetings here at Caboto, from leading our fundraising efforts for weekly fines whether we like it or not and being the Dream Team captain of our Bingos and of course from manning the Niagara Gate - or perhaps it should be called the "Willms Gate" at Art in the Park -

how appropriate is it that the vendors, when coming in on Saturday morning,

see Walter on guard with a friendly hello and welcome.

The list goes on and on.... but one side of Walter that some of you may not know is his desire, commitment and passion of seeing and helping the next leaders of our Club who will write the history of 1918 for the next 100 years.

He has great vision to help our younger and newer members succeed and reach their own goals in Rotary with a simple response

“How can I help?”

Walter has an incredible commitment and dedication to reach out to our new and younger members.

He has supported and mentored so many of us who joined the Club. Starting the Walter P. Willms Award was a highlight for me personally, but finding out that when Young Rotary Leaders met for the first time in 2016 that they made Walter an honorary member was a close second.

As a club, we will never be able to thank Walter for what he has done for us but in having an award in his name we can try our best to pass on his legacy of commitment to recognize the next generation of leaders in 1918.

The award named after Walter was provided to Julia Lee in 2016, and Sevda Barin in 2017.

This year we had an overwhelming number of applications of many outstanding candidates. In my view, the number of applications is mostly in part the honour it would be for a Rotarian to have an award in his name.

Spare me for a moment - take a little time to provide you a little detailed information and background of Walter that you may not know...

Walter P. Willms, from 1953 to 1988, enjoyed 36 years in the teaching profession which makes all other professions possible.

- Teacher for the Windsor Board of Education: Vice Principal & Principal for 4 years with The Burlington Board of Education:

- Supervisory Officer for 5 years with the Ontario Ministry of Education: was appointed to be the first Assistant to a Regional Director in Ontario, Eastern Ontario (Ottawa Valley)
- Supervisory Officer for 13 years with The York County Board of Education – successfully amalgamated 24 smaller school boards
- Director of Education for 7 years with The Windsor Board of Education
- In the mid 80's, he chaired a Provincial Steering Committee which led the formation of the Ontario Public School Directors Association; was elected to be its first President in 1986.

IN ROTARY

- Initial Rotary membership with the Rotary Club of Smiths Falls, ON, 1964
- Inducted as a Member of the Rotary Club of Windsor (1918) in June 1982 - 35 years ago
- Board of Directors for OVER 25 years
- President 1997-98 and January to May, 2013
- Sergeant at Arms, 2003 to 2018
- Club's General Manager, February 2002 to June 2003.
- Director of the Rotary Club of Windsor Foundation Fund, 1997-2010
- Paul Harris Fellow in excess of three rubies and a Rotary International Benefactor.
- Sponsor of several current Club members
- So many committees of the Club that include: Art in the Park Executive, Finance Fundraising (Coordinator for Bingos & Raffles), Literacy Membership, Administrative Membership, Well-Being (Visitation), New Generations (Youth Services), Past Presidents' Advisory, Honourary Member of the Young Rotary Leaders Committee.

Recipient of Rotary Awards:

- Rotary Club of Windsor (1918) Most Valuable Rotarian Award, 2005-6
- Rotary International District 6400 DG's Rotary Shares Award, 2007-8
- Eli Goldin Ideal of Service Award, 2008-9

- The Jim and Dianne Moore Club Service Award, 2010-11
- Rotary International Club Builder Award, 2011-12
- Rotary International District 6400 COG Award, 2016 17

Community Involvement/Vocational Service:

- Long time Trustee on the John McGivney Children's Centre School
- Former Member of the Board of Directors for Centres for Seniors, Windsor and now a member of the Governance Committee at Life after Fifty
- Past President of the Board of Management, Essex-Windsor Canadian Red Cross Society
- Past President of the Council on Aging, Windsor-Essex County
- Past Vice-President of the CNIB Windsor-Essex Advisory Board
- Recipient of the Canadian Commemorative Medal for the 125th Anniversary of Confederation
- Recipient of the Proverb Heritage Organization Humanitarian Award presented at The John Freeman Walls Historic Site, "Where the Underground Railroad had its End."
- Extensive Involvement in Junior Achievement programs

Walter had an outstanding career in the teaching profession and has made a life out of Service Above Self.

Great honour on behalf of the Club to have this recognition, I call up President Elect Gord for the presentation of the award.