

Local woman wins volunteer award

By Jake Storey

Bancroft citizen Marilyn White was recently selected to receive the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism for her work with various North Hastings schools and Relay For Life, but she has been volunteering in some form or another since she was 12 years old, when she would look after local children while their parents were away. 'I've been good to others and for the most part they have been great to me in return,' says White.

This year, the June Callwood Award is being granted to 18 individuals and six organizations. The award was named in honour of June Callwood, a Canadian journalist who founded or co-founded more than 50 social action organizations. It is granted by the Ontario government and was first awarded in 2007.

White spent much of her professional career with the Hastings Prince Edward District School Board where she is currently on extended leave due to a double pontine and brain stem stroke suffered in 2013, which led to permanent brain damage. She says that the experience nearly left her nearly paralyzed and that she believed it would most certainly leave her in permanent nursing care. Amazingly, she has recovered since the ordeal and has gotten back to volunteer work and has devoted a significant amount of her time to assisting stroke survivors with their rehabilitation.

White was nominated by a friend, Art Deboo, who said 'Marilyn is a strong caring lady who is always there for anyone in our community in their time of need. She has driven folks to their cancer treatments, sat with them during their last days, and opened her home to folks when their family didn't have room during a tragic death.'

In a letter of support for her nomination, Claude Robinson, a former co-worker of White, wrote 'Her administrative abilities were exceptional and she always found time to volunteer for the betterment of the student body.' She received five letters of support for her nomination.

Upon being nominated, White said she was 'quite upset with everyone involved in the nomination process.' White added, 'I don't help others in order to receive recognition for any of the little or major things I do and I didn't want recognition for it either. I just want to show others that someone else cares and will help them out no matter what the situation.' Though she says she did eventually come to terms with the nomination after a few weeks. 'I have finally come to realize this is a very prestigious award that has been bestowed upon me. Bancroft and the surrounding communities have such an amazing reputation for giving and opening their hearts and wallets in support of so many great causes.'

Upon learning she had won, her community held a celebration in her honour. Her nominators and those who wrote letters of support for her spoke, and White said that their kind words humbled her. 'I wish their speeches had been taped so I could listen to them afterwards,' said White

The award will be presented to White, along with the other recipients, at a recognition ceremony during National Volunteer Week in April.