

*Middlesex's Leading
Ladies Awards*

Presented by the Women's Caucus of Middlesex County Council

Thank You!

To each of you who took the time to nominate and recognize one of your fellow Middlesex County community members, thank you.

We know that especially during this pandemic, women across the County have stepped up to take on even more responsibilities. Although no one has done it for the credit or the fame, your efforts have not gone unnoticed.

This Awards Night is a small token of our appreciation from the Women's Caucus of Middlesex County Council to say thank you for everything that all of you do to take care of yourself, and others, across the County.

- Warden Cathy Burghardt-Jesson

Teresa Fischtner

Nominated by: Malyn Fischtner

Teresa owns Over The Deep End, an aquatic fitness studio that provides water therapy & exercise to over 300 people weekly, all ages & abilities. She keeps people engaged during covid with “daily love” emails with fitness videos, funny videos, poems and more.

She is the most deserving woman I know.

Kristy Bell

Nominated by: Ian Bell

Not once during this pandemic have the boys and I felt like Kristy wasn't available to the family and with all she has achieved for those in need over the past months that is a feat. The effort and hours she has expended to make things happen for those who need it would have made a lot of us crash long before now. With Kristy, there is no such thing as can't. I am exceptionally proud of her. As a wife, as a Mother, as a leader and as a champion for the needs of women.

Nominated by: Susan Hewgill

Try to imagine the important and busy position she carries for all those women she provides service to, while managing family life at the same time through Covid. Kristy does so with a beautiful smile, kind heart and wonderful sense of humour. I am so very proud of this woman, this mother, this wife, this daughter, this community member and this leader.

Sonia Gomez

Nominated by: Jamie Burnham

Sonia works tirelessly to bring stray animals off the streets, to spay and neuter them and find them happy homes.

This is an thankless job but she does it out of love for the animals. She balances her work with animals, while caring for her son and mother.

Jenifer Tuft

Nominated by: Victoria Moore

I would like to nominate Jenifer Tuft. She lives in Lucan on and not only is she a wife and mother of two, she has also been battling MS.... all during a pandemic.

She's very positive, always smiling or making the room laugh.

She's truly an inspiration and everyone should know that.

Pat Hodgins

Nominated by: Alison Dale

Pat also continues to make time to help those in need in her community. She is always checking in on neighbours and others in the community, especially those who are shut-in during the pandemic. She makes flower arrangements for neighbours and elderly folks stuck at home, just to brighten their day. She brings them groceries or anything else they may need. She drives them to medical appointments and COVID vaccination appointments. Pat always puts others first, rarely making time for herself. But she wouldn't want it any other way.

Della Hedley

Nominated by: Aimee Morrissey

She lives in Lucan Biddulph but serves many in Middlesex County as a Personal Support Worker. Although it is her paid employment she sacrifices full weeks and weekends often being the only contact people can rely on.

Her efforts are tireless and beyond essential both during the pandemic and going forward to help those in our community.

Sue Lidbetter

Nominated by: Paul Manders

Sue is the ultimate community volunteer with board roles at organizations like Oxbow School, Ilderton Minor hockey and time spent on a long list of other volunteer initiatives and causes. She is always keen to help and lift others when needed. She helps manage a small business that also does a meaningful amount of sponsorship and monetary support for many local causes and organizations.

Julie Jenken Loft

Nominated by: Karna Brennan

She is constantly giving back. During Covid she held “Giving Wednesdays” where she would give proceeds of her sales to local charities. These charities include the Food Bank, Rural Women’s Shelter, Sari, Child Can and many more. Her countless donations to those ill or in need in our community is incredible.

Rose Walton

Nominated by: Sarah and Clyde Walton

I was hoping to please nominate Rose Walton for the Leading Ladies Awards. She is the Principal at Oxbow Public School and truly deserves this award. As most of us struggle daily to help our 2, 3 or 4 children remote learn people ask how parents are coping. She doesn't have 2 or 3 kids... she has over 500 kids plus teachers and other staff. She can regularly be found in classroom assisting teachers, on yard duty with the kids and getting children on and off busses daily.

Dealing with the unknowns of COVID-19 and its impact on the 522 students at Oxbow PS is something Rose takes very seriously. Working to support the team of 47 staff and provide a “We’ve got this” type of role model has been a 24/7 obsession for her. Fortunately, she only sleeps roughly three hours per day and spends the balance of it looking out for “her” 522 children.

Kathy Lucier

Nominated by: Teresa Lojzer

She is a perfect example of a strong, capable woman. She cares for her two teenaged children with compassion and honesty. She decorates cakes for her own small business, Kathy's HotCakes and her creativity knows no bounds.

Ashlie Macintosh

Nominated by: Laura Sutherland

Ashlie has lived in Ilderton almost 15 years and made a positive impact on the community. As a mother of a child with special needs she's been a huge advocator for people with special needs by ensuring community developments consider the needs of people with disabilities by ensuring playgrounds and trails are accessible. She's a fantastic mother and wife. She's a wonderful business owner who supports and celebrates the successes of other women in the community. Her positivity is contagious.

Jean Coles

Nominated by: Rhona Choja, Laura Sutherland, Lisa Mackay

Rhona: She is an exemplary role model for women in our community. Her contributions and infectious positive approach to supporting local is valued and appreciated.

Laura: There is nothing Jean cannot do, or will not try. She's been a close friend of mine for over 10 years now and I've never heard her say the word "no".

Lisa: Jean has worked closely with many small businesses in town to help them better meet the needs of our community and always encourages community members to utilize services in town first before going elsewhere. I am so glad she chose Ilderton to call home and proud to call this amazing woman my friend.

Maureen Viana

Nominated by: Anne Pearson

Maureen has gone above and beyond for the community over the last year. Her and her family randomly picked families in the area to drop off treats that they purchased from local businesses. She has made many donations to local charity initiatives. Her team has done emergency dental work even through the lockdowns. Her family and team really demonstrate true caring and compassion.

Cheryl Patton

Nominated by: Jean Coles

She owns Positive Image Fitness and had taken so many lickings due to the pandemic and she just keeps coming back like the Terminator.

Anza Arif

Nominated by: Jean Coles

She has taken her convenience store and turned it into a general store and community hub for Ilderton.

Karna Brennan

Nominated by: Karen Simmers

I met Karna when we moved to the area four years ago. She welcomed us to the neighbourhood with her friendly smile and homemade muffins. Since then, I have learned that she not only welcomes neighbours in this fashion, but she also drops off homemade goodies to members of the community faced with life challenges. Her “care” packages have been received by bereaved families, individuals that are ill, those recovering from surgery, “shut-ins”...the list goes on. Karna has delivered homemade meals and goodies to these individuals and families...this includes those that were home alone stricken with COVID.

Erin Orouch

Nominated by: Anonymous Fellow Community Member

I met her briefly while she was waitressing in a local restaurant and she is such an unbelievably kind young woman with big dreams. She had broken her foot before our second lockdown and no longer worked there but I have followed her story very closely. She decided to open her own business doing nails in the area when unfortunately covid hit once again and we were put on to another lockdown. Instead of staying home and fretting up on the fact that she no longer has another income this young woman created a beautiful business called paintings by Erin. She creates the most colorful beautiful pieces of artwork but also started providing virtual paint nights teaching young children how to paint.

Aleisha Gleisner

Nominated by: Brenda Meulendyks

She had a very active Facebook page that she highlighted medical devices for home health during the pandemic, she partnered with my company (Flagstone Financial Group) and VON for a Christmas secret Santa for seniors in our community where community members would purchase gift baskets from Bossons Pharmacy that were then delivered to seniors in isolation by the VON.

Jill Lavitz

Nominated by: Brenda Meulendyks

She assists families in (funeral) planning and arrangements and is one of the most compassionate people I know. She hosts monthly community speakers at Denning's cafe that brings vital and important information on a variety of topics to community members. She is a Rotary member and she owns a local restaurant with her husband John called Back Alley Burrito.

Nancy Powers

Nominated by: Brenda Meulendyks

Nancy has initiated and completed a variety of fundraising initiatives in our community. She's an active member of the Chamber of Commerce, she has been a freelance photographer for the Chamber, as well as a dedicated volunteer for many years.

Gail Barker

Nominated by: *Kassandra Marriott*

Gail challenges each of us to think critically, while maintaining empathy, exploring diversity and standing for equality. Gail welcomes conversations of all nature, and spends time listening to all points of view to see from each lens where someone may be coming from. Gail's smile lights up a room (when no one can see beyond the mask), and she is always a source of calming energy.

Suzanne Racine

Nominated by: Terry Racine

She volunteers for the Catholic Church as a financial consultant. When our community lost our church in Delaware due to a flooding, she was on the committee to relocate the church to Mount Brydges. Suzanne has volunteered for the Strathroy Hospital Foundation as an advisor. As President of the Caradoc Legion, Suzanne helps support me in my leading role in the community and our veterans.

Brenda Meulendyks

Nominated by: Lori Van Geffen

She is an entrepreneur in Strathroy running her own business with a staff of 5, and just currently took on a business partner. She has been a big supporter of the community, and has been the first female President of the Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital Board and is currently on the Middlesex Community Living Board. She also partnered with Aleisha Gleisner from Bossom's and the VON or a Christmas Secret Santa for seniors in the community.

Marilyn Fletcher

Nominated by: Terry Racine

I know Marilyn from Caradoc Legion. She's been on the Executive and is currently the 2nd Vice President. Marilyn is the Seniors Committee Chairperson. Her work is tireless in keeping Caradoc Legion open during COVID. The monthly dinners at Caradoc Legion are organized by Marilyn that keeps our Branch financials. As President, I have seen her amazing work ethic. Everyone loves Marilyn.

Dorothy Haan

Nominated by: Michelle Couto

Dorothy Haan is a genuinely kind human being that encourages and uplifts everyone she interacts with. Dorothy inspires people to be more and do more by leading with her heart. She always goes above and beyond the call of duty in everything she does, while humbly sitting back and watching the joy she spreads to everyone she meets.

Dorothy is a very talented seamstress. Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic Dorothy has created hundreds of masks that she gifts to individuals as well as organizations. She even dropped off specially designed masks secretly into the mailboxes of people who needed a boost in this hard time.

Kelly Sauvé

Nominated by: Anonymous Community Member

I would like to nominate Kelly Sauve head of guidance at LDSS. Kelly has always gone a step above for the teenagers in our community. Throughout this entire pandemic she has made it her mission to reach out and check on 'her kids' as she calls them. She's the one person some of these teenagers will reach out to and in such a time of despair especially for our youth, she encompasses the true spirit of someone who should be recognized for her efforts.

Nancie Irving

Nominated by: Shauna Rae

She exemplifies public and community service in her volunteerism, her engagement and her willingness to help others in need, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Wendy Spence

Nominated by: Shauna Rae

Wendy Spence of Dorchester for her continuous commitment to reporting on, and shedding a light on Thames Centre businesses, events and the community at large and doing that in new and creative ways during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

Michelle Mundy

Nominated by: Shauna Rae

Michelle Mundy of Dorchester for her commitment and creativity in keeping the Dorchester Lions engaged in a mostly online environment during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. Also for her service and ingenuity in trying to draw people and various groups together to work as one.

Jean Davis

Nominated by: Chelsea Hicks-Webster

Because she single handedly (and consistently and passionately) runs the local
Food Bank.

Arden McClean

Nominated by: Laura Campeau and Becky Clark

Laura: Arden supports her community in literally ALL the ways, selflessly, because she truly cares and sees the power (and ripples) in fostering those connections and activating others! She also brought a Summer Camp to Thorndale through The Boys & Girls Club, facilitates Mental Health Programming, and Social Programming for ALL through the I Love Thorndale Skills Academy and Youth Hub.

Becky: Arden is a hard-working professional, wife, mother and passionate community builder. Arden works tirelessly to create new opportunities for all members of the community, but particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic she has focused her efforts on the youth population in our community.

Laura Campeau

Nominated by: Chelsea Hicks-Webster and Jennifer Bellame

Chelsea: She does all of her community engagement work with a huge focus on involving others. And the pride she has around living in Dorchester, and making our community better is contagious.

Jennifer: Laura is from Thames Centre and is a wonderful advocate for a inclusive community, she is supportive towards others ideas and growth as a community. She makes time to give back to the community in so many ways.

Lisa Farquharson

Nominated by: Chelsea Hicks-Webster

Why she deserves recognition: Because she's the inclusivity queen. She has consistently fought battle after battle to make Thames Centre more inclusive. She's been an advocate for greater inclusivity in Dorchester's school's, community programs and infrastructure.

Cayleigh Shoniker

Nominated by: Chelsea Hicks-Webster

Why she deserves recognition: Because she's a badass (am I allowed to say that?)
Seriously, though. Her "get'er done" attitude is effective at getting things done...
and it's also contagious. Just being around her makes me want to jump to action
and accept no roadblocks.

Gisele Johnston

Nominated by: Chelsea Hicks-Webster

Why she deserves recognition: For her dedication to two things that make all humans better: kindness and continuing education. She is a constant advocate on social media for kindness, understanding and empathy. And I picked up on her values within 5 minutes of meeting her in person.

Dynamic Doulas

Nominated by: Chelsea Hicks-Webster

Why she deserves recognition: These two are incredibly authentic and empowering in their social media presence. (Probably in real-life too. But I only know them through social media. Boooo COVID!) But seriously, they are both doulas, and every post they makes talks validates women's experiences, encourages them to love and accept themselves... and also makes me laugh. I never feel sold to. Only genuinely seen.

Judy Brown

Nominated by: Chelsea Hicks-Webster

Why she deserves recognition: For her dedication to helping her 96 year old uncle. Judy is my neighbour and her time with her uncle is like clock work. Every morning around 11 am, she leaves to make him lunch, spend time with him, and help him run errands. Except Sundays, when she leaves by 9 am to take him out for breakfast. All uncles should be so lucky as to have a niece like Judy. (Plus, she taught my kids tap dancing in her driveway, and let's them play in her pond!)

My Neighbour, Karen

Nominated by: Chelsea Hicks-Webster

Why she deserves recognition: For taking incredible care of those in her home. She lives with her parents (also amazing people), and spends a lot of time and energy supporting them in their health goals. Everytime I talk to her, it's so obvious how loyal she is to her family and ensuring they have what they need. This even extends to her cats. Twice each day, without fail, she goes to the barn behind her house to feed and spend time with the cats that live there. Her supportive nature even extends over the fence. She's always quick to smile, start a conversation, or talk sweetly to my dog (even when he's barking obnoxiously.)

Shauna Rae

Nominated by: Claire Crossley

Shauna is currently the Communications and Project Coordinator at Community Futures Ontario, supporting economic development in local communities. She is also the co-host of the popular podcast, Kitchen Confessionals, which successfully launched during the Covid pandemic and, finally, Shauna writes a column for Business London Magazine called “The Broad Perspective” about women in the workplace. Regardless of the work, Shauna’s overall goal is to always shed light on shared and collective experiences.

Laura Garner

Nominated by: Jessica Pinet

As our local librarian she has always gone above and beyond to use the library to bring people together. From her Friday morning circle times, crafts, activities, themed days, and her endless knowledge of books and authors, she has always been such a wonderful presence in the community. Her presence and kindness has been even more important to our family during the COVID-19 pandemic. Curbside pick ups are one of the few activities my children can still look forward to. Knowing she will always have a fun Take home activity and surprise bags ready to go has been great. Also knowing I could reach out and have her help find books to support my son's speech therapy has been so appreciated

Becky Clark

Nominated by: Arden McClean

Becky has given so much of herself and her time to strengthening her community, and there is no doubt that Thorndale is a better community thanks to all of her efforts. As a Director of I Love Community and member of I Love Thorndale she has dedicated herself to identifying gaps and leveraging assets for the betterment of her community. Thorndale is a growing community, and before Becky fostered community building efforts there was a fear of it becoming a bedroom community, but instead new Thorndale residents have a clear sense of community pride.

Rita Heeman

Nominated by: Will Heeman

Aunt Rita has been an absolute rock for Heeman's and worked basically 7 days a week, 14-16 hour days for months on end. The silent force, owner and do-all at Heeman's. Couldn't think of someone more deserving but more shy of attention and the spotlight. Without her - the plants, the crop scheduling, the books, the COVID protocols (she's been so strict at enforcing it all from day 1) doesn't happen. She's here leading crews at 6am, here after we close until 11pm doing payroll, books, treatment orders, etc. The woman doesn't stop!