



# Media Release

November 2, 2014

## **Neighbours reach out, connect and belong at Kitchener's Festival of Neighbourhoods Finale**

KITCHENER – Kitchener Festival of Neighbourhoods held its 2014 finale on the weekend, with 35 neighbourhoods celebrating the 21<sup>st</sup> season with an increase in the neighbourhood capital grant draw prize to \$21,000.

More than 30,000 people participated in the 141 activities registered with Festival of neighbourhoods from across the city of Kitchener. Neighbourhood gatherings ranged in size from five to 2,000 participants.

The winner of the festival's main prize, the \$21,000 capital grant, was the Brock Street neighbourhood for their Garage Sale and BBQ activity.

The Pillar Award, for a neighbourhood who has registered an event for five or more years, was won by the Alpine Community thanks to Hammond Plumbing. And the Newcomer Award (for a first-time registered activity) was won by the Grand River North neighbourhood, again this year sponsored by Happenate.

The Auditorium neighbourhood won the CityWork's Arts and Culture Award for their Musical Front Porch, where residents are invited to show off their musical talent on their front porch while a growing group of neighbours walk from street to street together. The event is in its second year and a growing success in the neighbourhood.

This year, the activity that won the Youth Award was a Lemonade and Rainbow Loom creations sale organized by two young girls aged 9 and 10 to raise money for the Humane Society. They invited the entire neighbourhood surrounding Chicopee by posting posters throughout the neighbourhood and posting an invitation on their neighbourhood Facebook page and raised \$114.97 for the Humane Society of Kitchener/Waterloo. Waterloo Regional Police Service continue to sponsor this award.

The Safer Neighbourhoods Award, sponsored by the Swanson's Home Hardware Building Centre, was awarded to the Valleyview neighbourhood for their Windale Park Clean-up. This park is tucked in behind housing and has not been typically well known or used. Improving the park has made it a better serviced area that is more widely used and cared for by the community with a greater sense of ownership and has become more of a safe meeting place in the community.

The MMM Group sponsored Green Award: Bridgeport neighbourhood for their Spring and Fall Nature Walks in Bechtel Park led by local ecologist, Larry Lamb. The Heritage Award selection is the Mount Hope-Breithaupt Park neighbourhood for their Jane's Walks presented by the Festival of Neighbourhoods.

The Grand River North neighbourhood was selected by the Waterloo Regional Independent Living Centre for the Inclusion Award for their Picnic in the Park activity. This gathering was open to and attended by people with varying ages, from different cultures and with varying physical abilities.

The Neighbourhood Connections award, sponsored by the Social Planning Council, is being presented to the Traynor-Vanier neighbourhood for a second year in order to provide more time for more engagement and community development activities to strengthen the social connections in this neighbourhood.

The Ward Challenge is going to Ward 10 (Counc. Dan Glenn-Graham), with 25 neighbourhood events for the fourth time in a row!

"The Festival of Neighbourhoods initiative is really about providing the resources, encouragement and recognition that Kitchener citizens might need to reach out beyond their own home, to take that small step in making connections with their neighbours and to help create a sense of belonging at the neighbourhood level" said Janice Ouellette, facilitator of volunteer resources for the City of Kitchener. "The finale is about sharing what has been done and celebrating the efforts and successes of these everyday hometown leaders".

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