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Diamond Jubilee Medal: Thanks for your work

By Alison Langley, Niagara Falls Review
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Diamond Jubilee Medal winner Ted Johnson.

When Ted Johnson started walking the beat in St. Catharines in 1968, the rookie police officer couldn't have predicted his career would soon take him on a path that has helped to shape the Niagara Regional Police.

Prior to 1969, there were 14 separate and distinct police forces within the Niagara Region.

Members of the municipal police forces banded together in 1969 and created the Niagara Regional Police Association.

Johnson was named the first president of the new association.

His role was to create a joint bargaining committee, representing all the former municipal police forces of the area. He also helped to co-ordinate wages, benefits and pensions.

He also served as a director for the Police Association of Ontario.

Now retired, Johnson said he was surprised when an official-looking envelope showed up in his Fonthill mailbox.

The letter informed him he had been selected as a recipient of a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal.

"This was a very nice thought by the association, to put my name forward," Johnson said.

Paul DiSimoni, current NRPA president, said the association received a number of medals to distribute to members and that Johnson was an obvious choice.

"He's the father of the Niagara Regional Police Association," he said. "He led the charge to form the current service and association that we have today."

Johnson was one of 38 people to receive a medal on Saturday at the NRPA member recognition luncheon in Port Robinson.

"I am proud to award these medals to those who have given so much to better our community in Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie," said Niagara Falls MP and Justice Minister Rob Nicholson, who presented the medals.

All told, 60,000 Canadians of all ages and from all walks of life will receive the commemorative medal that not only marks the 60th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne, but also recognizes Canadians who have made significant contributions to their communities.

Dan Patterson, president of Niagara College, received his medal from St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley on Nov. 6.

"It is very moving to be acknowledged in this way," Patterson said.

"It inspires me to work harder for a stronger Niagara and to ensure our students receive the best educational opportunities available."

Ironically, his medal is not the only royal recognition in the Patterson household.

His wife Saundra received the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Medal in 1977 for her community work.

"Having two medals in the same family is quite an honour," Dan said.

Bradley awarded 14 medals to St. Catharines residents.

He said it was a tough decision to select only 14 recipients — he could have given out many more.

"You always wish you could nominate a hundred people in your community," he said. "It was nice to be able to recognize people for their service to the community."

Niagara Falls MPP Kim Craitor also awarded 14 medals to people from Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"It was an honour for me to award them," he said. "To be honest, I could have given out thousands because we have so many people who are involved in their communities."

John Corfield, of Niagara Falls, received his award Oct. 16.

The active community volunteer, who is a member of the Niagara Falls Rotary Club, was nominated by Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati.

"I am honoured to receive it and I am humbled that the community recognizes my volunteer efforts," he said.

Other local recipients include Boys and Girls Club of Niagara fundraising volunteer Jeff Wallis and Heartland Forest builder Dan Bouwman.

Brock University professor Ian Brindle was also awarded a medal as was Betty-Lou Souter, CEO of Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold.

The public was able to contact their MP and MPPs to suggest names of candidates.

The allocation of medals included 200 from the Governor General, 200 from Prime Minister Stephen Harper, 20 for each senator, 30