

Gahan and Lee-Gahan win Blyth's 'COTY' Award

By Shawn Loughlin
The Citizen

Joe Gahan and Megan Lee-Gahan, founders of the Blyth Kids Club, have been named Citizen of the Year Award winners for Blyth.

The husband-and-wife team have been working hard this year to both bring programming to the village for its young people and keep the Blyth and District Community Centre busy every night of the week after talk of potential closure dominated the headlines earlier this year. This comes after Gahan had worked to bring soccer back to the village, initiating a grassroots effort to engage young people in The Beautiful Game, working with nets at Blyth Lions Park last year, which is where the seeds for the Blyth Kids Club began to grow.

The club offers nightly activities at the community centre, including soccer, roller hockey, arts and crafts, roller skating and rollerblading, and more as part of its weekly offerings. However, it has since expanded to include monthly disco parties that have been well attended and even movie nights at Blyth Lions Park, which have, recently, included live music, activities, food and more.

The club has worked closely with the Blyth Lions Club, often using the park and its volunteers working in conjunction with one another, but the Kids Club has also attracted the interest and support of just about everyone in Blyth. Service clubs from the Blyth Legion and Legion Ladies Auxiliary to the aforementioned Lions, as well as many businesses and private citizens have donated money to the club in an effort to see it grow - and grow it has.

As a result of this support and fundraising, many of the club's activities in the late stages of the summer have been free for children, which the pair says has been nice to offer, ensuring that cost isn't a barrier to children enjoying all that the club has to offer them.

"The whole concept of the Blyth Kids Club is to provide something for our kids in the community, something fun to do, grow their confidence and help them make some friends along the way, all while utilizing the facility we have in this town," said Lee-Gahan to *The Citizen* in a story back in April. "I grew up in Blyth and we moved back after over 16 years [in] Toronto, to give our children a childhood like I had here in this amazing community, and the Blyth



Thinking of the children

Blyth residents and married couple Joe Gahan, (back row, far right) and Megan Lee-Gahan (not pictured) founded the Blyth Kids Club to promote the well-being and community spirit of the area's youth. The program offers a variety of activities for young people to engage with including soccer, movie nights and disco parties. (Courtesy photo)

arena was a huge part of that. The arena was the centre of our community, with dances, banquets, weddings, etc., and some of my core childhood memories are in that building, and we hope to bring back some of that so our children have the same as I did.

"We are running as a fully non-profit, volunteer-based group, and with that we need as much support from the community, be it volunteers to help run the door or help with the games or donations. If you don't have time to spare, any monetary donations would be greatly appreciated, with any extra money raised, going to help grow this club offering as many activities as we can get the help to do, while keeping costs down for everyone."

Speaking to *The Citizen* in July, Lee-Gahan said that the club frequently welcomes between 50 and 60 young people on its soccer nights and between 10 and 30 young people on other nights. The first disco party saw nearly 120 young people take part (they had planned on 100) and the first movie

night brought about 75 people to Blyth Lions Park to watch *The Goonies*, though that night represented somewhat of a soft launch for the event.

At the End-of-Summer Party in the Park, which featured a screening of *The Sandlot*, dozens of families were in Blyth for what many said was one of the best nights of the summer.

Last month, Gahan even spoke to North Huron Council as a delegation in regards to reclaiming some township property in order to establish a proper soccer pitch for the village. Council took his request

under advisement and has yet to report back.

In addition, the pair hope to keep the club active through the winter months, even as the arena will be busy with broomball and hockey.

On Gahan's side of things, he has become a bit of a local celebrity as Irish Joe, the leader of The Lucky Charms, which has become the go-to band for many public events and fundraisers in the area. The band has often played in exchange for charitable donations, more recently using its concerts as an opportunity to raise money for the Kids Club.

North Huron Publishing has been

awarding Citizens of the Year in Blyth and Brussels for nearly 40 years, adding a third category last year to honour someone from throughout Huron County who has made a difference in their community.

Nominations are made by members of the community and the winner is then chosen by a panel of the past five winners of the award.

On Nov. 23, North Huron Publishing will be returning to an in-person Citizen of the Year Award night to honour all three of this year's Citizen of the Year Award winners, as well as 2020 winners Bob Kellington (posthumously) in Brussels and Annie Sparling in Blyth, 2021 winners Zoellyn Onn in Brussels and David Cartwright (posthumously) in Blyth and 2022 winners Lissa Kolkman in Blyth, Margaret McInroy in Brussels and Karen Webster as the first-ever Huron County Citizen of the Year. The event will begin at 7 p.m. at Trinity Anglican Church in Blyth.

Past winners of the award in the Blyth area are: Evalena Webster, 1986; Frank and Cenetta Bainton, 1987; Winona McDougall, 1988; Margaret Whyte, 1989; Simon Hallahan, 1990; Dr. Richard Street, 1991; Bill and Maxine Seers, 1992; Margaret Caldwell, 1993; Helen Gowing, 1994; Don Scrimgeour, 1995; John Stewart, 1996; Janet Amos, 1997; Betty Battye, 1998; Robb Finch, Dave Cook, Brent Scrimgeour and Doug Walker, 1999; Murray Siertsema, 2000; Charlie Shaw, 2001; Lavern Clark, 2002; Bev Blair and Thelma Johnston, 2003; Steven Sparling, 2004; Don "Barney" Stewart, 2005; Lois van Vliet, 2006; Janice Henry, 2007; Joe Hallahan, 2008; Brock and Janis Vadden, 2009; Jean Nethery, 2010; Kay Hesselwood, 2011; Steve Howson, 2012; Barbara Bosman, 2013; Marian Hallahan, 2014; Nellie Mason, 2015; Ernie Phillips, 2016; Ric McBurney, 2017; Carl Nesbitt, 2018; Jane Smyth, 2019; Annie Sparling, 2020; David Cartwright (posthumous), 2021 and Lissa Kolkman in 2022.

Clausius crowned Huron COTY winner

By Shawn Loughlin
The Citizen

Wayne Clausius from the Grand Bend area has been named the winner of the second-ever Huron County Citizen of the Year Award, joining Karen Webster of the Wingham area, last year's winner.

Kristin Crane, Director of the United Way Perth-Huron's Social Research and Planning Council and the Co-Chair of Poverty to Prosperity (the county's anti-poverty coalition), nominated Clausius for the award on behalf of the coalition. She noted his commitment over more than 12 years to helping low-income households at tax time.

"Wayne is a volunteer tax-filer who files taxes for low-income households and who has been coordinating the volunteer income tax program in Huron County and area for more than 12 years," Crane wrote in her nomination. "With more than 20 volunteer tax-filers, the program has assisted hundreds of struggling households to file their taxes so that they can get access to their much-needed entitlements in the form of social assistance benefits and income transfers."

"Last year alone, families in the area received over \$2.7 million because of this work. As a method

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Nicholson named Brussels 'Citizen of the Year'

By Shawn Loughlin
The Citizen

Roxane Nicholson has been named this year's Brussels Citizen of the Year Award winner, thanks to her extensive work as the co-chair of the Inspiring our Future campaign.

The Inspiring our Future campaign sought to raise funds for the renovation and expansion of the Brussels, Morris and Grey Community Centre. It exceeded its goal of \$2 million by nearly \$500,000, as of the end of last year, when donations were still coming in. Renovations at the centre, made possible by the federal, provincial and municipal governments, in addition to the Herculean effort by the project's fundraising committee, are nearing completion. Several events, including the Brussels Fall Fair and Brussels Lions Club's Elimination Draw, have already been held in the auditorium, while hockey is scheduled to return to the centre later this month.

Nicholson was nominated nearly a dozen times, including by past Citizen of the Year Award winner Doug McArter (2007), who lauded Nicholson for her countless hours of dedication in keeping the campaign on track - volunteering in the position for more than four years.

Nominations also noted Nicholson's unwavering dedication to volunteering with the North Huron Community Food Share while maintaining her day job.

Another nomination called Nicholson a "competent, positive and dedicated leader" who has maintained her role at the head of the campaign to ensure that its full vision is realized all the way to the end of the work being done.

"While acting in that important role for the community centre fundraising, [Nicholson] also continued her position managing the North Huron food bank. She



Sensational sum

As co-chair of the "Inspiring Our Future" campaign to raise funds for renovations at the Brussels, Morris and Grey Community Centre, Roxane Nicholson was instrumental in exceeding an already lofty goal. Nicholson, left, was nominated for the prestigious honour almost a dozen times, including by some past winners. (File photo)

spearheads the stuff-a-truck event each year and spends days a week lending her compassionate expertise to fight food insecurity in our community," read a nomination from Nicole Duquette, a Brussels resident and fundraising professional who worked on the campaign.

"On top of these already meaningful contributions, Roxane

finds time to support participants in a program for adults with developmental differences and in her not-so-spare time last year helped a Ukrainian family find housing and helped them move in. In addition to all this, she maintains her paid job as a bookkeeper and administrator of a construction and farming business. Somehow, she balances

all that with being a loving mother, wife and friend."

According to another nominator, Nicholson is a "very vital members of our community" who has also worked on programs for the Bluevale United Church's Sunday school program. The nominator said Nicholson has a "caring heart and a 'just-do-it' spirit".

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Past winners of the award in the Brussels area are: Cal Krauter, 1986; Wayne Lowe, 1987; Jack Bryans, 1988; Ida Evans, 1989; Bessie Johnston, 1990; Betty Graber, 1991; George Langlois, 1992; Howard Bernard, 1993; Joanne King, 1994; Frank Thompson, 1995; Audrey Cardiff, 1996; Leona Armstrong, 1997; Neil McGavin, 1998; Beth Earl, 1999; Lyle and Alice Brothers, 2000; Nelva and Spence Scott, 2001; Jo-Ann McDonald, 2002; Kathy Bridge, 2003; Jeff and Cathy Cardiff, 2004; Clara Blake, 2005; Phyllis Mitchell, 2006; Doug McArter, 2007; Nora Stephenson and Fran Bremner, 2008; Rene Richmond, 2009; Jim Prior, 2010; Cathrine Campbell, 2011; Jim and Lois Lee, 2012; Yvonne Knight, 2013; Dave Stephenson, 2014; Sandra Cable, 2015; Jean Davidson, 2016; Elaine Armstrong, 2017; Doug Sholdice, 2018; Mary Douma, 2019; Bob Kellington (posthumous), 2020; Zoellyn Onn, 2021, and Margaret McInroy in 2022.

Tax-filing assistance for low income residents aids in reducing poverty

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to reduce poverty in our communities, there is not much that is more effective than putting money back in a struggling person's pocket!"

Crane said that she had witnessed, first-hand, Clausius' work and wondered how he could be recognized for it, finding this award to be the perfect opportunity.

"Wayne spends most of his time dedicated to this cause and is so generous with his time. Wayne will meet people whenever he can, driving long distances to help people file their taxes all year round. For the majority of the years, he hasn't had any reimbursement for the expenses he incurred meeting people wherever they are. During COVID, when public spaces were shut during lockdown and he couldn't meet people indoors, he would brave the elements and have meetings in parks to maintain social distancing," Crane said in her nomination. "Wayne is truly an amazing person."

Crane says that not only has Clausius done all of this work himself, but he's crafted an infrastructure to train others and keep the work going for years to come.

"He has developed and nurtured and co-ordinates an entire team of volunteers. He helps them with difficult questions and challenging cases and does so with patience and grace. Wayne's commitment to ensuring that people have access to their rights and benefits is reflected in his compassion and understanding of the struggles facing families," Crane said in her nomination. "Wayne has created a strong poverty-reduction legacy in our county - one that deserves to be recognized,

celebrated and continued."

Clausius began volunteering with The Salvation Army in Goderich in 2009 and his role in the community has only expanded from there.

Clausius is the second-ever winner of the Huron County Citizen of the Year Award. The honour went to Karen Webster of the Wingham area last year for her extensive volunteer work throughout the community.

Clausius and the rest of this year's winners (alongside the Citizen of the Year Award winners from 2020, 2021 and 2022) will be feted at Blyth's Trinity Anglican Church on Thursday, Nov. 23, beginning at 7 p.m., marking a return to an in-person Citizen of the Year celebration.

Join in the celebration

The Citizen will be hosting an evening to recognize "Citizen of the Year" winners on Thursday, Nov. 23 at 7 p.m. in the Trinity Anglican Church, located at 166 Dinsley Street in Blyth.

Home Cooking for the Holidays

Do your friends come to you for cooking advice and ask (or beg) you for your delicious recipes? Well, we want your recipe too! Send in recipes for your favourite holiday meals, desserts, appetizers, sides or cocktails, and be featured in **The Citizen's** upcoming special section on December 1, **Home Cooking for the Holidays**. This section will feature tons of delicious recipes from talented readers like yourself, just in time for holiday entertaining!

Mail your recipe(s) to:

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Be sure to include your name with your recipe.

Deadline for submissions is
November 17

