

MEDIA RELEASE

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November 18, 2022

Community-building Champions Receive Thake Award

KEMPTVILLE - Long-serving community leaders Susan Warren and Dermid O'Farrell are this year's recipients of the Bill Thake Memorial Economic Development Leadership Award.

The winners were announced today at the 14th annual United Counties of Leeds and Grenville Economic Development Summit held at the North Grenville Municipal Centre. Susan is a resident of the Township of Rideau Lakes. Dermid is from the Municipality of North Grenville.

"These individuals have demonstrated leadership and outstanding commitment to the growth and vitality in their communities over the long term," said Warden Roger Haley.

"We are proud to honour them, along with our two remarkable nominees, for the level of volunteerism they demonstrate and the major contributions they continue to make," the Warden said.

The Bill Thake Memorial Award, also called the Warden's Award, has been presented for the past 12 years to community volunteers showing economic leadership in Leeds Grenville.

Co-winner Susan (Sue) Warren works tirelessly behind the scenes to make the rich history and genealogy of Rideau Lakes accessible to everyone interested in ancestry. For more than 42 years, she has volunteered her time protecting documents and archives while promoting the township's historical significance through books and films. As an author and retired librarian, Sue is at the forefront of the digitization movement ensuring visitors and future generations have access to archives. Sue is chair of the Rideau Lakes Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee and helped develop a series of documentary films on the Rideau to reach an even larger audience. She's a member of the Chaffey's Lock and Area Heritage Society; Elgin and Area Heritage Society; Friends of the Rideau; and the Ontario Genealogical Society.

Co-winner Dermid O'Farrell is community leader who is passionate about North Grenville. Dermid is President and Managing Partner of O'Farrell Financial Services Inc., a company he and his wife Donna Lee founded in 1997. He has been an active volunteer and board member with

many local organizations for more than 25 years, including the Grenville Community Futures Development Corporation and the Economic Development Advisory Committee. Dermid was president of the Kemptville District Hospital Foundation and sat on the Board of Directors for the Ryan's Well Foundation. He was appointed to the Kemptville Campus Board of Directors last year and is currently chair. Dermid served as Chair of the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo 2022 Local Exhibitors Committee.

Also congratulated for their many achievements within their communities were nominees JoAnne Sytsma, Township of Athens, and Derek Ouellet, Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands.

Since being introduced in 2011, the award has been presented to 18 individuals from across Leeds Grenville. Close to 50 deserving women and men have been nominated. Last year's recipients were Cathy Sheppard, of the Municipality of North Grenville, and Ken Watson, of the Township of Rideau Lakes.

During his lifetime, Bill Thake was known for his leadership and mentoring skills. He served 52 consecutive years on Westport Council to set a Canada-wide record as the longest serving head of a municipality.

The summit is hosted by the Counties Economic Development Office in partnership with Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes MP Michael Barrett, MPP Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 1000 Islands, Valley Heartland and Grenville Community Futures Development Corporations, and the Eastern Workforce Innovation Board.

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