

Social service workers honoured at Bhayana Family Foundation Awards

Vaughan Citizen | May 14, 2014

Frontline York Region social service workers were recognized for their dedicated efforts at the second annual Bhayana Family Foundation Awards in Vaughan Friday.

Three outstanding individuals and one team from United Way York Region partner agencies were honoured at Vaughan City Hall. The foundation identifies and awards social service workers for their dedication, innovation and creativity, leadership, and team achievement.

Each winner received a cash prize of \$1,000, made possible thanks to the generosity of Madan and Raksha M. Bhayana.

The foundation has sponsored these awards with United Way agencies in Toronto, Calgary and the Lower Mainland.

This year's recipients were honoured for their contributions to people and communities in York Region through excellent service delivery and supports, United Way York Region CEO Daniele Zanotti said.

"Through our In Every Neighbourhood campaign, we are working hard to close the growing gaps in our region," Mr. Zanotti said, referencing the organization's aspiration to raise \$30 million in 3 years. "In a growing region where the demand for services is outpacing our supply, the nominees and winners of this year's awards are superheroes, providing a helping hand in every neighbourhood to people in need."

The impact of the honourees' work on the quality of life for thousands of people in York Region through critical frontline support is tremendous, awards founder Raksha M. Bhayana said.

"You are always ready to help and care for people across this region and the Bhayana Family Foundation is honoured to recognize your tireless efforts," Ms Bhayana said.

The foundation recognized individuals and teams in four categories: dedication, innovation and creativity, leadership and team achievement. Peer-to-peer nominations were reviewed by a selection panel comprised of social service sector workers, labour and one community member-at-large.

The 2014 Bhayana Family Foundation Awards winners were:

- Dedication — Cindy Cepparo, program director, the Vitanova Foundation;
- Innovation and creativity — Lesley Sims, resource development director, 360°kids;
- Leadership — Mario So Gao, youth services coordinator, Centre for Immigrant and Community Services; and
- Team achievement — Blue Door Shelters staff, Da Chan, Anastasia Sourasis, Rabia Irfan, Patricia Okonta, Harpreet Banwait, Sandra Luchies, Zohra Bawari, Debora Cruz, Behnaz Moeinzadeh, Nadia Mirza and Ludmila Belositchi.

Ms Sims expressed gratitude for an award from her peers.

"Our workplace is empowering because I find great meaning in the work we do every day and the positive and encouraging environment embedded in our culture at 360°kids," she said. "We're always looking for innovative ways to engage and share our passion with the community."



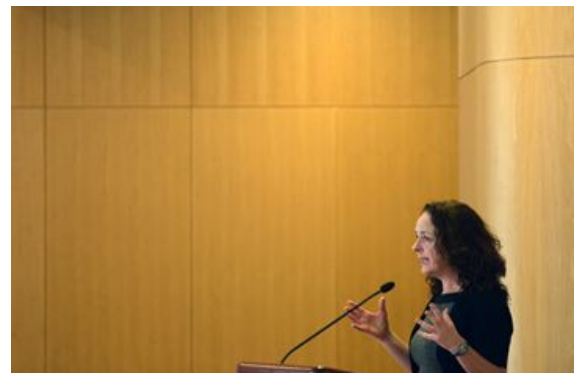
Lesley Sims, Director of Resource Development at 360°kids, accepts her award from Nina Bhayana (left) and Heather Mason-Wood during the 2014 Bhayana Family Foundation Awards at Vaughan City Hall Friday. (Nick Iwanyszyn/York Region Media Group)



Daniele Zanotti speaks during the 2014 Bhayana Family Foundation Awards at Vaughan City Hall Friday. (Nick Iwanyszyn/York Region Media Group)



Mario So Gao, Youth Services Coordinator at CICS, accepts his award from Nina Bhayana (left) and Heather Mason-Wood during the 2014 Bhayana Family Foundation Awards at Vaughan City Hall Friday. (Nick Iwanyszyn/York Region Media Group)



Mowat Centre not-for-profit executive lead Elizabeth Mclsaac was keynote speaker, sharing findings from her organization's most recent report, *Shaping the Future*, on leadership in the non-profit world.

“The non-profit sector contributes significantly to communities across Ontario, but we must increase our capacity to lead change,” Ms Mclsaac said. “The future of the non-profit world and its ability to have impact will be defined by our ability to attract and retain innovative, committed leaders who are able to work across sectors and in multi-stakeholder partnerships.”

Elizabeth Mclsaac speaks during the 2014 Bhayana Family Foundation Awards at Vaughan City Hall Friday. (Nick Iwanyshyn/York Region Media Group)



Members from Blue Door Shelters accept their team achievement awards during the 2014 Bhayana Family Foundation Awards at Vaughan City Hall Friday. (Nick Iwanyshyn/York Region Media Group)

United Way Bhayana Awards

Heather Mason-Wood speaks during the 2014 Bhayana Family Foundation Awards at Vaughan City Hall Friday. (Nick Iwanyshyn/York Region Media Group)