

# Volunteer Profile: Kevin Kennedy – Recipient of the 2014 Doug E. Lear Award

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The Doug E. Lear Award, sponsored by Allstate Canada, is handed out annually at United Way of York Region's Spirit Awards ceremony during our signature Celebration event. In memory of a dedicated and exemplary community volunteer and long-time Allstate Executive Doug E. Lear, this award honours a volunteer in our region who best exemplifies service to the community in the Human Services field. This year's Doug E. Lear Award has been given to a man who has devoted much of his life to supporting social service causes in York Region: Kevin Kennedy.

"I never anticipated receiving an award such as this one," Mr. Kennedy states. "I am shocked by it, yet extremely honoured. It's certainly not the reason behind why I volunteer; however, it is nice to get recognized for the work I do. It's a wonderful

feeling."

For approximately 25 years, Mr. Kennedy has been an active advocate for homeless individuals and families in York Region through his work at United Way partnered agency, Blue Door Shelters. He began working with the organization in 1989, fulfilling a student placement.

"As a student in the Social Services Work Program at Seneca, I was required to interview an agency," Mr. Kennedy adds. "I grabbed the telephone book to look for an organization, and found Blue Doors Shelters (back then it was called Men's Support Services). During my interview I asked if they participated in student placements, and the rest is history."

From that placement, Mr. Kennedy progressively moved up within Blue Door Shelters: working as a counsellor, then promoted to assistant manager, and eventually Program Manager. Throughout his years with the organization, Mr. Kennedy exhibited an unrelenting passion when it came to his work, and his clients.

"Kevin Kennedy is dedicated to the issue of homelessness in York Region, and it shines through in the work he has done at Blue Door Shelters in the past, and his tireless volunteer efforts with the organization today," states Anne Stublely, Executive Director, Blue Door Shelters. "He provides Blue Doors with strong, solid leadership, and has a compassionate understanding of why individuals need our support and services. The entire staff at Blue Doors is thrilled that Kevin has received this award, and we are happy that this has placed a spotlight on the tremendous work he has done around the issue of homelessness in our community. He not only volunteers his time, he works as an advocate and teacher to educate, and raise awareness."

Kevin continued to pursue a career in social services by accepting a teaching position at Seneca College in the Social Services Worker Program; but he couldn't leave Blue Door Shelters behind. As such, he became a volunteer for the organization, and was elected a Board Member in 2004 and Board President in 2006. During his tenure as Board President of Blue Doors, Mr. Kennedy has been an integral part of the strategic planning process, and in shaping the mission and direction of the organization.

"Over the years the residents of Blue Doors Shelter have taught me so much, and have inspired me," Kevin adds. "I have always been fascinated by their courage, strength, and how they came across Blue Doors. At times there are labels placed on these individuals, or people feel that those who are living between homes can be placed into one category; which is simply not true. At the end of the day, anyone can fall into this situation. Each person I have come across over the years never thought they would be in this circumstance, and each of them has a story that is unique from the next."

In addition to Mr. Kennedy's philanthropic activities with Blue Shelters, he has also been a speaker for United Way on many occasions, volunteered at campaign kick-off events, and sat on the following committees supported by our partnered agencies: York Region Abuse and Assault, Sex Offender Treatment, and Future Abilities Creative Employment (FACE). In addition to supporting social service causes, Kevin has also acted as a volunteer coach in East Gwillimbury and Lake Simcoe for the last seven years. What inspires Mr. Kennedy to support and donate his time to so many organizations in his community?

"My parents have inspired and taught me so much about giving. Growing up, they were involved in numerous volunteering activities, that laid a path for me to follow," Kevin states.

On behalf of everyone here at United Way York Region, we would like to congratulate Kevin Kennedy on his 2014 Doug E. Lear Spirit Award.

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