

36th Citizen of the Year – Brett Mitchell



Brett Mitchell, centre, with the crew that surprised him at work last week with the news that the newsman is the 36th Citizen of the Year.

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Anyone who knows Brett Mitchell knows that he's a man on a mission.

Well, many missions, often at the same time. But if anyone's up for it, he is.

Mitchell was named the 36th Citizen of the Year last week, and when the announcement party arrived at his office with balloons and champagne, the owner of The Selkirk Record was humbled.

"I'm shocked right now. I don't know all the names on the list of previous winners, but the ones that I can recall...they've done amazing things for our community. I can't believe that I'm on that list," Mitchell said.

"One of the things that I believe is that we were lucky as a family to move to this community that's full of these people whose main focus is to make this place better for all of us."

Mitchell and his wife Janet moved to Selkirk in 1989 and you could say he literally hit the ground running. He was part of the Selkirk Journal's ad sales team and he used his job to build community.

He was part of a group that started The Record in 2010 and he continues to use the newspaper to bring the community together.

Jim Pelletier nominated Mitchell for the Citizen of the Year Award and says Mitchell's energy is limitless and so too is his dedication to the communities of Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements.

In his nomination letter Pelletier laid out his reasons for nominating his friend.

"I couldn't think of a more deserving, hardworking and community minded individual than Brett Mitchell," Pelletier wrote.

"Under his iconic hats, there are so many more different hats that Brett wears: father, spouse, son, entrepreneur and philanthropist. At times it's hard to differentiate between Brett Mitchell

the person and Brett Mitchell of The Selkirk Record as they are hand in hand and both entities do so much for the communities and the people that live in them.”

Shauna Curtin, SDCF Chairperson, said it was an honour to inform Mitchell that he’d been selected as the Citizen of the Year for 2021.

“Brett Mitchell is certainly a most deserving recipient of the Citizen of the Year Award and I’m proud to congratulate him on behalf of the Selkirk & District Community Foundation,” Curtin said.

“His hard work and incredible energy definitely make our communities the best that they can be.”

A few of Mitchell’s volunteering gigs include board member for the Festival on the Red, member of the Dufferin Gang Committee, Lockport Development Group and the Selkirk Biz. He’s also had a hand in Selkirk’s Canada Day celebrations, Triple S Fair & Rodeo, the Santa Parade, Homes for the Holidays and Holiday Alley, the Highland Gathering and the Lockport River’s Edge Run.

Mitchell has dedicated much of his adult life to raising funds for and awareness of Huntington Disease. His father lived with Huntington Disease and Mitchell made the difficult decision to be tested to see if he had it as well – the tests showed he does not.

He’s involved in the Huntington Indy Go Kart Challenge, Rally the Sleds for HD Guinness Book of World Records snowmobile runs in 2002, 2003 and 2005, the HD500 500 K snowmobile ride since 2014 and Light It Up for HD at the Merchant Hotel.

He says he’s extremely proud of his boys – Liam, Julian and Simon, who work hard on behalf of Huntington Disease as well.

“Our kids have now taken up the cause too,” Mitchell said.

“They have volunteered for every Huntington event they were able to since they were tall enough, which didn’t take long. They also volunteered for many events here in our community, and it makes us so proud.”

In 2002, Huntington Society of Canada, Winnipeg Chapter, President Vern Barrett, wrote this about Mitchell in a nomination for a Regional Award of Merit:

“Brett Mitchell has been actively volunteering with the Winnipeg and Area Chapter for the past five years, and has made a lasting mark at the local, regional and national levels. For the past three years Brett has served in a leadership role as Vice-President of our Chapter and has brought his cheery smile and business experience to our Chapter meetings. Brett’s energy, commitment, and entrepreneurial spirit have helped us meet and surpass many program goals...Brett has been very active in our Chapter, in promoting events across Manitoba, and has contributed nationally as well. He has shared his HD personal family connection with newspapers and anyone else who

would listen. He has excellent people skills and is a great team player and mediator. Brett has an infectious “We Can Do It!” attitude that is hard to resist.”

Mitchell said he’s just one of many who work hard to make the Tri-S communities the best they can be, and he couldn’t have done any of it without his family – wife Janet and sons Liam, Julian and Simon.

“I have a family and my family made sacrifices for me to be there, so really, we were there as a family to help this community,” Mitchell said.

“When I was at a meeting my wife Janet was at home with screaming, hungry kids, I couldn’t have done what I was doing. It’s a family commitment and there’s lots of families that do it.”

And he said he gets as much, or more, out of volunteering, as he gives.

“Volunteering is kind of selfish because there’s residual things that come of it, but also the big thing is I love being around these people,” he said.

“You just get so much positive energy from these people, so I find that it’s to my advantage to be around these people and acquire that energy that they have.”

Congratulation Brett Mitchell!

The Selkirk and District Community Foundation is a charitable organization that provides financial support to charitable causes and agencies in the region, which includes Selkirk, St. Andrews and St. Clements. Gifts from donors enable the Foundation to support countless groups and individuals in our community. The Foundation has given in excess of \$3.4 million to more than 125 local charities and community organizations during its 25 years. For more details contact SDCF Executive Director Bev Clegg at 204.785.9755.