



The late Milt Pedwell with some of the many kids he inspired over the years.

Who will be the 38th Citizen of the Year? Nominate someone today!

There's a long list of past Citizen of the Year recipients – 37 names long to be exact – each of them unique in their story, but connected through their love and commitment to people and community.

The Selkirk & District Community Foundation is asking for nominations for this year's award.

Last year the award was presented to Milt Pedwell, a legend in the canoe and kayak community and a hero to the countless kids whose lives he touched while teaching them how to paddle.

Pedwell was shocked, and deeply touched, when he was surprised by a group of family, friends and fellow paddlers who broke the good news to him at the Selkirk Canoe Kayak Centre (SCKC) last Oct. 15.

“Thank you all very much,” a teary-eyed Pedwell said at the time.

“Anything I’ve ever done for this club, I’ve always had a whole pile of people helping me. I’ve had a heck of a pile of fun and I’m gonna keep on doing it as long as you’ll have me.”

Well, they’d have loved to have him keep on doing it for years to come if they could have, but sadly, Pedwell passed away in December of last year.

Bonny Wynnobel, a board member with the Selkirk & District Community Foundation and a paddler who spent a great deal of time with Pedwell, said it was her honour and privilege to know Milt, and his absence is still felt.

“Milt was kind and caring and had a way of making every person he met feel special,” Wynnobel said.

“He was a teacher, and a fantastic one at that, but more than that he was a wonderful human being and it was my pleasure to be a part of the celebration that honoured him as the Citizen of the Year. His commitment to community, and the younger generation, was so authentic, so Milt. He is missed dearly.”

Pedwell started the Selkirk paddling club shortly after arriving in the city in 1991. The city was his retirement home, but his idea of retirement was to become immersed in his community and get folks – young and old – out on the water and active outdoors in the winter.

He succeeded wonderfully on both fronts, and earned the respect of the hundreds, if not thousands, of people he touched over the years.

His daughter, Lynn Pedwell, says her dad was deeply moved by the Citizen of the Year award. It was overwhelming for him at first, but he came to embrace it and all that came with it.

Lynn says suffering through two years of isolation during Covid was tough on her dad, and the award, along with all the celebrations for the SCKC’s 30th anniversary, brought great joy to him and he reconnected with at least 100 people through the two events.

“I think he found it overwhelming, the scope of what it was and how important it was. Like, it was a big deal...he was very emotional a couple of times, giving speeches and thanking people,” Lynn said, noting her dad always said he didn’t do any of it alone.

“Because of the Canoe Club 30th anniversary and the Citizen of the Year Award, his last two years were really amazing. I’m very grateful to Bonny for nominating him because it was a huge deal to him. I miss him very much.”

There was no doubt Pedwell could teach you how to paddle and how to stay safe on the water, but it’s widely agreed as well that he had the ability to help guide others through life.

Corrine Johnson, President of SCKC, the group that nominated Pedwell, spoke on behalf of the club members who were there to celebrate with Pedwell last October. She started by calling him ‘one of a kind’.

“I want for you to take a moment and drink this all in. Look around at some of the people whose lives you have so deeply impacted. Take a moment to realize the impact you have made,” she said.

“This was your dream and you have made it an amazing reality. Over the years you created this beautiful place and taught so many people so many things. You created a safe place for all without judgment or prejudice. Your legacy will forever be known and associated with this club and every person and child that has had the privilege of meeting you.”

Pedwell’s name now stands alongside previous winners, including Jean Oliver, Rene Gauthier, Brett Mitchell, Michele Polinuk, Blake Burnett, Bob Hebert, Shirley Muir, the late Eva Hawryshko and the very first Citizen of the Year, the late Eileen Cyr.

The Citizen of the Year Award recognizes an individual, who through their own initiative, ability and effort has made an exemplary achievement in the area of the RM of St. Andrews, RM of St. Clements and/or the City of Selkirk.

Nominators should explain how the individual you are nominating has made the community a better place to live and work; provide a detailed account of the individual’s volunteer contributions and/or professional accomplishments, as they relate to the community; and describe how the individual’s actions have impacted and helped the community.

Written nominations are welcome from any individual, organization, business, association or institution and can be dropped off at the Selkirk & District Community Foundation office at 200 Eaton Ave., to the attention of the Citizen of the Year Selection Committee, or e-mailed to exdirector@sdfc.ca

For more information, contact 204-785-9755 or email selkirkfoundation@shaw.ca

Deadline to nominate is Monday, Oct. 2.