



Malegus, third from right, with friends and family after learning she'd been named the 40th Citizen of the Year.

Lesli Malegus named 40th Citizen of the Year

There's a commonality amongst the recipients of the Citizen of the Year award in that they all make an impact in the communities of St. Andrews, St. Clements and Selkirk. There's also a uniqueness about them, because they all do good work in their own special way.

This year's recipient stands out for the above reasons, and also for being the first ever to have a family member who's a previous Citizen of the Year winner.

Lesli Malegus is the 40th Citizen of the Year, 30 years after her mom, Jean Oliver was honoured as the 10th Citizen of the Year in 1994.

Selkirk & District Community Foundation Chair Deborah Vitt, with flowers in hand, headed up a group of friends and family who showed up at Malegus's Selkirk Travel to surprise her with the news.

"Lesli Malegus, you my dear, are the Citizen of the Year," Vitt said.

"You have been such a gift to the community. All the work that you have done, we love you. Thank you."

For Malegus, who did her best to keep her reaction suitable for children, was in shock.

"It was a very surprising morning, I was blown away actually," Malegus said afterward.

"It's overwhelming. You don't do things in the community for recognition, you do them because it's the right thing to do. I just always try to live by that motto that it's the right thing and never expect anything, so this is really heartwarming."

When the news had sunk in just a wee bit, Malegus admitted the arrival of the surprise party was all right with her.

"It was the best way to start a Friday," she laughed.

"Every Friday should start like this."

Mom Jean Oliver, who kept the secret from her daughter for a couple days, was proud, and both were unaware that they were the first family members to receive the award.

"I'm very proud and I know how hard she works for everything in the community and has for years and years. It's really wonderful that she's being recognized for all the work that she's done," Oliver said.

Malegus credited her mom for instilling her commitment to community and volunteerism.

"I don't think the apple falls too far from the tree, I think it was the way we were raised, to help the community and give back as much as you can. I'm very proud," Malegus said.

Malegus was nominated by another former Citizen of the Year, Michele Polinuk, who said Malegus is the consummate professional and her volunteer work in the region knows no bounds.

"I've known Lesli for quite a while now, for quite a number of years, and having the opportunity to work alongside her in various volunteer positions and boards, I've seen someone who works so hard and never looks for the glory, or to be in the spotlight," Polinuk said.

“She wants to be as far away from the spotlight, or from the pictures or the camera, that she can be. Her positions on many boards have been treasurer or finance, because they don’t have to be front and centre. She always works so hard and has given to this community since she was young.”

Malegus is or has volunteered for numerous organizations over the years.

She joined the Sunova Credit Union Board in 2009, and was re-elected in 2011. The Sunova board oversees the activities and strategic direction of the credit union on behalf of its members and Malegus was continually re-elected up to and including the merger with Access Credit Union in 2022.

From 2009-2013 she was a member of the Selkirk & District Community Foundation and from 2012-2013 she was a board member for the Selkirk Community Renewal Corporation, a non-profit committed to community development, renewal and revitalization based on the priorities of the community. In 2014, she became the Renewal Corporation’s treasurer.

In 2010 Malegus joined the Rotary Club of Selkirk. She was familiar with Rotary due to her her mom’s involvement over the years and she now shares the same passion for the service club. After a few years as a member, she joined the executive and again took on the role of treasurer.

She became president of Rotary for 2024-25 and is again president for 2025-26. She is the co-chair of the annual Lobsterfest, Rotary’s largest fundraiser.

“The Rotary Club of Selkirk helps the community and region for various ages groups, from food security of the NOW program, the children’s expansion in Gaynor Family Library, to promoting literacy with the book sales. There are many more ways the Rotary impacts the community, but for Rotary to do this, you need members like Lesli with dedication and commitment to volunteering time,” Polinuk said.

“Lesli exemplifies ‘service above self’ as Rotary is less about an organization, and more about a ‘way of life’. Lesli displays every act of kindness and helps transform lives by serving and inspiring in all of her organizations and in her professional life.”

Malegus joined the Selkirk Food Bank Board in 2018 and currently is the treasurer. Polinuk says Malegus, and the others who volunteer for the food bank, do it because the need is great.

“The necessity and importance of the Selkirk Food Bank can never be understated. The need is high and continues to grow. A strong board is integral to ensure the food bank can function to provide food security,” she said.

“The board members are not listed on their website or on any social media platform. They are not looking for thanks. These individuals are carrying out the work, because it is needed.”

Congratulations to Lesli Malegus!