

YMCA Northumberland Celebrates Local Peacemakers

Cobourg, ON – On Thursday, November 20, 2025, YMCA Northumberland welcomed the community to the annual Peace Medal Breakfast. It was a morning for spotlighting the everyday peace-builders who help our community shine all year. Sponsored by Koellner Tax and Accounting Services and the Cobourg Police Service, the celebration at the Best Western Plus Cobourg marked 37 years of honouring local individuals, groups, and youth who create meaningful change without seeking the spotlight. YMCA staff, Connor Ross and Madelyn Schultz, opened the inspiring morning by calling attention to colourful hand-made “worry worms” that each attendee received, thanks to the random acts of kindness efforts of Kirsten Boniface and her team of helpers from YMCA Child Care.

“Peace is more than just the absence of conflict. It is a daily commitment to justice, inclusion, and empathy—the very values the YMCA upholds,” says Eunice Kirkpatrick, President and Chief Executive Officer, while addressing the audience. *“YMCA Peace Week celebrates those who “act for peace”—individuals of all backgrounds who are taking a stand, lending a hand, and acting as a guiding light for others to follow.”*

It was a full house of local elected officials, dignitaries, past Peace Medal recipients, community members and Y staff. Mark Galonski, YMCA Board Chair, emphasized that a peaceful community is not created through grand gestures alone but through the small, intentional acts of kindness shown daily. Rayleigh, an independent singer/songwriter from Cobourg gifted everyone with lovely music throughout the morning. YMCA Board Directors Emily Chorley and James Behan presented the Adult Peace Medals, while Ian Koellner of Koellner Tax and Accounting Services and long-time supporter of the breakfast, introduced this year’s youth winners.

- Amy MacGillivray (Adult Peace Medal Recipient): Through her warm smile and presence at Horizons Thrift Stores, Amy has impacted the lives of all she meets with her innate ability to bond and empathize with the individuals who are both neighbours in this community and those abroad. Amy’s story reminds us to look for opportunities every day, to make a difference in someone’s life—however small.
- The Northumberland Giving Tree (Adult Peace Medal Group Recipient): For 36 years, the Giving Tree has ensured that no child in Northumberland wakes up without a gift on Christmas. Everything they do serves to bring joy, dignity, and possibility to children when it matters. The Giving Tree thrives on the collective heart of dedicated volunteers and partners who work together to bring holiday magic to families throughout Northumberland. Representing this amazing organization were Darlene Bunn, Mary Dunphy, Wendy Wotton, Alice Scott, Tom Cable and Cheryl Baker.
- The Northumberland Pride Youth Committee (Youth Peace Medal Group Recipient): This remarkable group of young leaders are using courage and compassion to reshape Northumberland for the better. They have spoken up to ensure 2SLGBTQI+ youth feel included and supported, in schools, in community groups and in conversations across the county. Their efforts during the Pride Parade and beyond have encouraged others to listen more deeply to youth voices. They have shown us that young people are not waiting for the future but they are shaping the present.

Special thanks to Board Director, Kevin Griffin for introducing Jennifer Lavoie, current Board Director and a member of the Philanthropy Committee for YMCA Northumberland, who spoke about Accelerating Growth in Emerging Economies. She highlighted her eight-year business advisor career in Latin America, Asia, East Africa, Southern Europe, and Canada’s North and shared how peace transcends borders; we are all unified in our desire for stronger communities.

This event was part of YMCA Northumberland’s Annual Peace Week, running November 15–21, 2025.

For more information, please contact:

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ABOUT YMCA NORTHUMBERLAND

As a charity, YMCA Northumberland provides vital community services that have a positive impact on pressing social issues—from chronic disease to unemployment, social isolation, poverty, inequality and more. The Strong Community Campaign helps countless children, teens, adults, and seniors in the community. YMCA Canada is one of the longest standing and largest charities nationally, with a presence in Canada since 1851 and now serving more than 2.1 million people annually across 1,700 program locations.