

Orangeville a first-place winner in Communities in Bloom contest



By Mike Pickford

The Town of Orangeville scored big this past weekend, placing first overall in its population category in the national Communities in Bloom (CiB) contest.

It was quite the feat for a community taking part in only its second national competition and Ted Zarudny, a long-time enthusiast of CiB, spoke of his pride at seeing Orangeville beat out two other municipalities for the top prize in the general excellence award for those with populations between 10,001 and 30,000. The Town achieved an impressive Five-Bloom Silver rating at this year's awards.

"It was quite a surprise to win the nationals, especially after such a short time being involved," Mr. Zarudny said. "It is a tribute to the hard work of the Town, the volunteer groups and service clubs, and the citizens. Winning will allow us to decide what category we could compete in in 2019."

Mr. Zarudny noted that winning a national CiB competition now puts the community "on the map" and could provide a huge boost to Orangeville's tourism sector.

Communities in Bloom is a Canadian non-profit organization whose mandate is to foster friendly competition and challenge municipalities across the nation to beautify their civic spaces.

As noted by Mr. Zarudny, this was Orangeville's second time competing in the national event. Last year the community was awarded a Five-Bloom Bronze rating, winning the Community of Gardeners Award and serving as a finalist for both the Environmental Action Award and CiB Canada 150 Award.

For the record, a bloom rating is determined by the total score of a judge's evaluation. Results range from one bloom to five blooms. There are four levels of five blooms exclusive to the national and international edition of the competition. Five blooms is awarded to all communities that achieve a score of 82 to 83.9 percent, bronze is awarded for those that score between 84 and 86.9 percent, silver for 87 to 89.9 percent and gold for 90 percent and over.

Judges Susan Ellis and Tina Liu run the rule over Orangeville this summer, evaluating the community in six key areas – tidiness, environmental action, heritage conservation, urban forestry, landscape and floral displays. Following their tour, the duo reserved special praise for the Friendship Gardens, installed at Headwaters Health Care Centre. The brainchild of Friends of Headwaters, the gardens have been in place since 1997.

"Having raised money to buy equipment and a critical care unit for the hospital, (Friends of Headwaters) looked at the beautiful new facility and saw the barren landscape outside. Eight spectacular gardens now surround the hospital, providing horticultural therapy for all patients, staff and visitors," they wrote. "The gardens are well kept and maintained and are a wonderful example for any community health centre that wishes to provide a holistic, thoughtful and therapeutic setting for healing."

This year's national finals competition was held in Strathcona County, Alberta on Sept. 29. Among those in attendance, representing the Town, were Mr. Zarudny and Councillor Sylvia Bradley. In total, eight Canadian communities were honoured for their efforts in preserving their community, while the towns of Lewes, Delaware (USA) and Usk in Bloom in Wales (UK) were recognized as winners in the international challenge category. A further 15 communities were presented with outstanding achievement awards. The Town's CiB committee will hold an appreciation night this evening at 7.00 at Tony Rose arena to thank all those who helped with the 2018 national judges tour and officially announce the results from the national competition.

For a complete list of results, visit www.communitiesinbloom.ca.