

Ajax-Pickering hospital foundation honours volunteer

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By [Kristen Calis](#)

AJAX -- Although Pat McNeil has recently stepped down from both the Ajax-Pickering hospital's board of directors and the foundation board, he still plans to act as a resource.

"Hospitals rely on the government for funding, but they also rely on the community," said the recent recipient of the 2009 Howard Sokolowski Award. "We have to cherish our hospitals."

The award, created in 2001 honouring the former CEO of Tribute Communities and long-time hospital volunteer, is presented annually to an individual, group or company within the business community for devoting time, resources and leadership to benefit Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering, as well as advocating for the goal to improve health care in west Durham.

Each year, Durham artist Edward Falkenberg creates a unique work of art for the award, and this year's piece was called "Kaboom".

Mr. McNeil, senior vice-president of generation development at Ontario Power Generation, was given the award at the Mayors' Charity Golf Classic last month. He was chairman of the Rouge Valley Health System foundation from 2005 to 2007, and sat on the foundation board until June. He was also a member of the RVHS board of directors until last month. OPG and its employees are also heavily involved in helping the community and the hospital.

The Whitby resident stepped down from his board positions due to his job transfer out of his Pickering office to Toronto, which involves a long commute. Being on a hospital board is a one- to two-day commitment each week, he said, and he simply can't find the time to properly commit to it.

Mr. McNeil played a vital role in securing funds for the redevelopment of RVAP, which is currently underway. He credits Pickering-Scarborough East MPP Wayne Arthurs for getting the ball rolling on the project, and is modest about the award, saying he simply helped others raise funds.

"I was shocked," he said. "It's very nice to get an award and I don't disrespect anyone who gave it to me, but it's everyone around me."



Sabrina Byrnes / Metroland

PICKERING -- Pat McNeil, senior vice president of generation development at Ontario Power Generation, has been awarded the Howard Sokolowski award for his many years of work supporting health care in the community. September 28, 2009.

Mr. McNeil's greatest technique for getting those fundraising dollars: "I would make friends with a lot of people."

Aside from the funds large corporate donors give to the hospital, Mr. McNeil noted every little bit helps and praises the funds raised at both hospitals by local volunteers.

"If I can encourage anyone to do anything, it's to get involved," he said.

Mr. McNeil's three adult children and his wife are all heavily involved in their community.