

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Distribution

Suzanne Burtenshaw wins 2017 Charlie Kelly Award



The Blue Mountains, ON (November 14)

Suzanne Burtenshaw of the Coldwater Steampunk Festival is the winner of this year's Charlie Kelly Award, presented at the BruceGreySimcoe Regional Tourism UnConference at Blue Mountain Resort on November 14th.

The award honours the memory of Charlie Kelly, who championed the idea of four-season tourism for Owen Sound. It embodies his spirit and looks to recognize the person who has helped to grow the tourism industry the most over the last year, through initiative, innovation or by acting as a role model.

Burtenshaw is a dedicated volunteer with the Coldwater Steampunk Festival. The festival brings thousands of attendees to the village of Coldwater to celebrate the steampunk era. Visitors often come in elaborate costumes and this themed event had record attendance this year, bringing visitors from as far as the United States, packing local accommodations and making a great economic contribution to the region.

Having moved to Coldwater in 2009, Burtenshaw saw the potential for the festival and the community and has worked to grow the volunteer base as well as the town's participation in the event. She works year-

round to plan the festival and knows that it's a great way to introduce visitors to the area's other attractions. Burtenshaw and her partner also host an Antique Car meet every Thursday from May until September, further increasing traffic to downtown Coldwater.

Described as an idea person with boundless energy, Burtenshaw's vision has contributed to the success of the Coldwater Steampunk Festival and has helped bring a new vibrancy to the village of Coldwater.

The Charlie Kelly award committee received 16 nominations this year for 12 individuals. Past winners include Mylisa Hendersen, Don Braden, Jeff Carver, Patti Kendall, Jack and Rick Salen, Ashley Miller, Bryan Plumstead, Chris Hughes and Jenny Amy.

Thanks to the support of Bayshore Broadcasting, this award has grown from recognizing tourism champions in Grey and Bruce counties to honouring those in Bruce, Grey and Simcoe counties.

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About Regional Tourism Organization 7:

RTO7 provides strategic and collaborative leadership to build, sustain and grow tourism in the region comprised of Bruce, Grey and Simcoe Counties (BruceGreySimcoe). We are one of 13 RTOs – independent, not-for-profit corporations – to which the Ontario government provides approximately \$40 million in annual funding to lead tourism planning, marketing and development in their respective regions.

Some quick facts about BruceGreySimcoe tourism:

- Tourism across the region accounts for over 34,000* jobs that deliver millions more in economic outputs
- BruceGreySimcoe has in excess of 25,000 accommodation rooms, including hotels, motels, camping and RV sites, commercial resorts, cabins and B&Bs**
- There are over 400 attractions across the region, and over 600 festival and event days each year**

*From OMAFRA EMSI Analyst query (2014) ** From the 2010 AECOM Region Strategic Destination Plan

-30-

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