# Central Okanagan Emergency Support Services Recognized for an Outstanding Humanitarian Response in British Columbia in 2021

Story by Ed Kolybaba on May 22, 2022

The Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise has recognized the volunteers of the Central Okanagan Emergency Support Services with a Rotary International Honourary Certificate of Appreciation.  The certificate recognized their continuing humanitarian service to those in dire situations due to a multitude of natural disasters in 2021.

The 2021 Award was presented to the management team and the volunteers of the Central Okanagan Emergency Support Services at their regular monthly meeting on May 19ᵗʰ, 2022, by Norm LeCavalier, the 2020-21 president of the Kelowna Sunrise Rotary Club. LeCavalier expressed appreciation "for the commitment, dedicated and exceptional community humanitarian service that was provided by Central Okanagan ESS throughout 2021, and for that matter in many past years."



Norm LeCavalier presents Honourary Certificate to Mel Capraire,   RDCO ESS Director

Appreciation and gratitude was extended to the voluntary management team of Mel Capraire, Beryl Itani, Dave Harrison, Nancy Wildeman, Garth Saunders, Carol Fazekas and Catherine Williams, along with the 142 volunteers who provided exceptional service and care to those in need during a devastating year of forest fires and flooding throughout the province, and house fires and an industrial accident within the Central Okanagan.



Ed Kolybaba, a member of the Foundation Committee of the Kelowna Sunrise Club, pointed out that "during 2021, the management team and volunteers responded through 76 days of displacement because of fires, 24 days of displacement because of floods and many days because of an industrial accident in downtown Kelowna which claimed lives and displaced many from their homes in the near vicinity of the accident." This essential service resulted in the community members volunteering 9,354 hours of their time, an equivalent of 390 days, to provide exceptional service to those in need without any hesitation. "Talk about 'service above self,' expressed Kolybaba.



L to R:  Beryl Itani, Tom Paterson (RCKS), Carol Fazekas, Mel Capraire, Nancy Wildeman, and Dave Harrison (Missing:  Garth Saunders and Catherine Williams)

Overwhelmed with the dedication and commitment of these volunteers, Kolybaba shared that "long hours, well beyond a regular shift for many, were put in day after day by the ESS Team, often commencing in the middle of the night or in the early morning, with little or no warning, to respond to a dire situation affecting an individual or family." He added "that those displaced from their homes and community who came to the Kelowna ESS Reception Centre completely devastated, overcome with fear and totally at loss, were received with compassion and understanding by the management team and volunteers who provided support, guidance and comfort."



Tom Paterson, chair of the Rotary Foundation Committee for the Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise, at the onset of the presentation, provided an overview of how The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International helps Rotarians to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace by improving health, providing quality education, improving the environment, and alleviating poverty in local communities and worldwide.

Paterson conveyed that " Rotary International, The Rotary Foundation, along with the Kelowna Sunrise Rotary Club, also recognizes that there are non-Rotarians and other organizations beside Rotary clubs that bring sustainable improvement to communities and that respond to humanitarian needs."  To this end, he stated that "the club was able and privileged to recognize community citizens and not-for-profit organizations that have contributed significantly in providing long and meritorious service in a way that has improved the quality of life of a substantial number of citizens within the community, and in this case also well beyond the Central Okanagan, while doing so within the ideals of Rotary, particularly 'Service above Self.'"