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ONTARIO MEDIA RELEASE

CELEBRATING THE POWER AND IMPACT OF OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS

2020 Kidney Foundation volunteer award winners announced

[MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO – April 16, 2021] - From April 18 to 24, National Volunteer Week, The Kidney Foundation will celebrate the dedication and commitment of our volunteer community. Volunteers give of their time in support of many programs and activities and make it possible for The Kidney Foundation to fulfill its mission.

“The awards recognize volunteers who showcase caring, leadership and philanthropy within their respective communities to benefit those touched by kidney disease” said Susan Tkachuk, Chair of the Ontario Branch Volunteer Recognition Committee. “Each volunteer makes a valuable contribution individually. But it’s their collective efforts that have a powerful impact in the lives of the patients we support. Let’s celebrate the amazing contributions of our 2020 Volunteer Award Winners.”

Alfred E. Coll Award: Greg Robbins

This award is presented in recognition of an individual who has provided outstanding leadership and service and has made a significant contribution, impact and commitment to the Ontario Branch.

For decades, **Greg Robbins** has provided, energy, insight, and financial support that has had an impact on all levels of the Foundation, and most importantly, has improved the quality-of-life for patients and across Canada.

He provided leadership at every level of the organization, serving as a Chapter President, the Ontario Branch president, and the National President – a trifecta that is unprecedented in our organization.

Outstanding Volunteer Award: Nikki Wagar, Patrick McConnell, J.D. Power

The Outstanding Volunteer Awards go to volunteers within the community for their devoted support of The Foundation.

Nikki Wagar is a committed and dedicated volunteer in the Kingston area. Nikki first became involved with the Foundation through the annual Kidney Walk. She found a huge network of support at a time when her son Bennett’s condition was worrisome and



committed to give back to her community in any way possible. She has been a tremendous ambassador both with the walk and the annual Six Degree Challenge. She gives of her time willingly while trying to balance work and caring for her young son. Nikki is always positive and willing to provide not just help but hope for others who are living with kidney disease.

Patrick McConnell has demonstrated commitment, service, and creativity on a consistent basis throughout his tenure as a volunteer with The Kidney Foundation. He has supported the Marketing and Communications team lending his special talents and skills as a photographer and writer. He is trusted and dependable and has dedicated countless hours to Kidney Foundation events with a cheerful and warm attitude.

J.D. Power is enthusiastic and in a few short years has made an incredible difference in Sarnia-Lambton. He is creative and generous and filled with unique ideas to raise awareness and fun. J.D. came to the Chapter with the idea of hosting a truck raffle, a partnership with three other charities, each poised to receive \$15,000. A Hot Sauce Challenge during the early days of the pandemic raised \$4000 for the Chapter. His enthusiasm and commitment are characteristics that make JD worthy of this special honour.

Programs and Service Award: Kingston Health Sciences Centre: Regional Renal Patient & Family Advisory Council & Windsor Regional Hospital Renal Program

The Kingston Regional Patient and Family Advisory Council is comprised of patient and family care partners, renal program managers, frontline providers, physicians, and renal leadership. The council is co-chaired by Cindy Fitzpatrick and Phyllis Davis. The Kidney Foundation enjoys a privileged position of regularly joining the council and provides ample time and opportunity for the Foundation to share new information, resources, local event information and more. The development of a Kingston Peer Support Group was a direct result of the support of this council. It is an ambitious and high-functioning group who are passionate and genuinely committed to improving the lives of kidney patients and their families.

Our second Programs and Services award was presented the **Windsor Regional Hospital Renal Program**. The renal team has been a tremendous partner of the Foundation; always willing to help and collaborate on initiatives to benefit patients. Team members support the Foundation formally serving on event committees and the Chapter's Leadership Group, they attend and support local events and help partner on educational activities like Tax Information sessions. The team ensures Kidney Foundation resources and materials are readily available for patients.

Excellence in Fundraising Award, Rita Dillon

Rita Dillon has been volunteering with The Kidney Foundation in the Niagara area since 2004. She volunteered with March Drive, but most notably has been the mastermind and lead of Niagara's Tag



Days third-party event. She coordinated student volunteers, locations and distributing the materials needed for event day to all the sites. She has raised over \$63,000 or the equivalent of almost \$4000 each year over those 16 years.

Kidney Walk Award of Excellence: Brian & Jay Armitage, Cathy Pennington, Belinda Robertson, Ranjeev Sethi, Sarnia-Lambton Kidney Walk and its top fundraising team Twisted Sister

The Kidney Walk award is given to individuals who have made a significant contribution to the overall results of the Kidney Walks including financial, human resource, new partnerships, in-kind, and/or public awareness.

Brian and Jay Armitage have been committed volunteers and active participants in the London Kidney Walk. Brian is a proud kidney transplant recipient and grateful to his daughter Jay, his kidney donor for his gift of life. Over the years, the duo and their family have raised more than \$50,000. Brian is always willing to lend a hand and support the work of the Foundation in any way he can.

Cathy Pennington is an amazing volunteer and ambassador for The Kidney Foundation. Cathy's son Christopher lives with kidney disease. Christopher has been recognized for his commitment and leadership of the Goderich Kidney Walk, but it is no secret that it takes a team and Cathy has been there every step of the way supporting the effort. She is committed to raising awareness about kidney health and the impact of kidney disease. Cathy is the driving force behind many initiatives including an online auction and pizza fundraiser and continues to seek ways to sustain and build the local walk.

Belinda Robertson has been an enthusiastic and committed member of the Windsor Chapter's Walk Committee for many years. She has been a Kidney Walk Champion for at least 5 years and captain's a walk team, encouraging them each step of the way to reach their goals.

Ranjeev Sethi is an active volunteer with the Hamilton Chapter. Over the last two years, Ranjeev and his team have raised over \$11,000 to support the walk. Ranjeev was the 2020 Hamilton Walk Ambassador and shared his story to highlight the impact of kidney disease. Ranjeev's passion and commitment are inspiring.

The **Sarnia Lambton Kidney Walk and its top fundraising Team Twisted Sister** hit an all time high in 2020 raising over \$50k, with Team Twisted Sister raising over \$21k. Reaching these milestones was possible because of the many Kidney Walk Champions and supporters who stepped up and stepped out in new ways to support the walk.

Outstanding Partner Awards: Cavalier Tool & Manufacturing Ltd., Drewlo Holding, Linamar Corporation, Kidney Car Partners: Nicklin Auto Parts & Recyclers, Hollywood North Auto Parts, Kenny U Pull, Sarnia Auto Wreckers, Glencoe Auto Recyclers.



Cavalier Tool has been a committed contributor to the Windsor Chapter since 2013. They have supported the Kidney Walk for many years through corporate sponsorship and have also had employees support the effort as donors and team members.

We are pleased to recognize the support of **Drewlo Holdings**. Allan Drewlo has been a strong supporter of The Kidney Foundation and kidney research for many years. He is committed to helping patients with kidney disease through his philanthropy. Drewlo Holdings has been a generous sponsor of the Stand Up for a Cure Comedy Night for several years.

Linamar Corporation have been committed supporters of the Guelph Kidney Walk for over 5 years.

Kidney Car has been a pillar of The Kidney Foundation's fundraising efforts across Ontario since 1992 and it is made possible because of the strength and commitment of our **Kidney Car partners: Nicklin Auto Parts & Recyclers, Hollywood North Auto Parts, Kenny U Pull, Sarnia Auto Wreckers, Glencoe Auto Recyclers**. These businesses engage with The Foundation to coordinate the collection of thousands of donated vehicles each year. The challenges of 2020 have only exemplified the strength and importance of the relationships with our partners.

Excellence in Leadership Award, Jim O'Brien

The Excellence in Leadership award is given in recognition of an individual or group who exemplifies outstanding leadership in advancing the work of the Foundation. It recognizes those who are committed to excellence in their service and exhibits integrity, collaboration and performs at a level that inspires others.

Jim O'Brien began his tenure at The Kidney Foundation 13 years ago. Under Jim's leadership, the Foundation reorganized its Ontario operation twice and expanded important revenue streams like Kidney Car and Kidney Clothes. Jim played a major role on the national scene as well, with his efforts being recognized both with the Bresinger Award of Excellence in 2019 and the National President's Award in 2017, and as part of a group in 2019. Jim deferred his retirement by several months to guide us through the first six months of the pandemic, a testament to his commitment and leadership.

Award of Merit, Michelle DiNardo, Cristina Howorun, June Jones

The Award of Merit is presented in recognition of an individual or group who has helped the kidney community realize the vision and mission of The Kidney Foundation of Canada.

Michelle DiNardo is always willing to lend a hand in any way she can. She has been an incredible resource to the Windsor Chapter over the years. In her role as a Renal Social Worker, she helped build relationships within the unit, and volunteers at patient events like our annual Christmas Party and Tax



Information session. She has also been an incredibly valuable resource connecting us with potential sponsors and supporting fundraising events like Celebrity Men.

Cristina Howorun has been a tremendous voice for The Kidney Foundation. She has used her talents and skills as a journalist to share her experience living with kidney disease and has helped raise important awareness about kidney health, the process of dialysis and the gift of organ donation. She has been an ambassador for The Kidney Foundation's Six Degree Challenge for two years and helped secure media support to help shed a light on this often-hidden disease.

June Jones is an amazing ambassador for The Kidney Foundation. She is always willing to offer support to those living with kidney disease with her kind words, heartfelt empathy and her personal experience living with kidney disease. She champions The Kidney Foundation within the hospital setting and encourages patients and families to reach out to The Foundation for support. June is a peer support facilitator, major gift donor and supports local fundraising events including the Kidney Walk.

President's Award, Executive Director Search Committee: Chris Costanza, Dr. Norman Muirhead, Mary-Pat Shaw, Terry Young, Elizabeth Myles

The President's Award is given in recognition of an individual or group who has assisted the President in advancing the work of the Foundation, and in support of the vision and mission. The members of the **Executive Director Search Committee** absolutely met and exceeded that criteria in 2020! Committee members dedicated many days and hours in researching and recruiting a search firm, developing a candidate profile, reviewing applicant profiles, conducting multiple rounds of interviews, discussing, deliberating, and making a recommendation to the Board. All this work is even more exceptional when one factors in the need to accomplish everything virtually due to the pandemic.

Through the unwavering compassion and devotion of volunteers and community partners, The Kidney Foundation can provide programs and services to those touched by kidney disease. Volunteers play a crucial role in improving the lives of those affected by kidney disease and, as the roots of The Foundation, help the kidney community grow and prosper each year.

About The Kidney Foundation of Canada

Excellent kidney health, optimal quality of life, and a cure for kidney disease. For over 50 years, this vision has guided us to be a collaborative, inventive and focused leader in the development of programs, services, research opportunities and awareness campaigns that have had a positive impact on the millions of Canadians living with, or at risk of developing kidney disease.

The Foundation's national research program has grown to become one of the most important sources of funding for scientists conducting kidney-related research. We are also committed to providing



education, information and support about kidneys and kidney disease. For more information, visit kidney.ca.

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