

Recipients of the Guelph & District Multicultural Award 2010

Three members of the Guelph and area community will be receiving Guelph and District Multicultural Awards at Riverside Park for their contributions. Grade 12 Centennial student Susie Pan, Guelph Arts Council executive director Sally Wismer and Cathy Taylor, on behalf of the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington, will be honoured Saturday at 3:30 p.m. at the main stage during the annual Multicultural Festival.

Having lived in Canada for a decade, Susie Pan has never forgotten her Chinese heritage. As the assistant teacher of a Mandarin class at Centennial, she helps struggling students overcome their barriers and appreciate the language. Pan is a proud Chinese member of the school and Guelph community, and she spearheaded her school's Chinese Club to enrich cultural life. Reaching beyond Guelph, Pan travels to Mississauga monthly as part of the executive and advisory board of the Mississauga Mandarin Association of Youth Empowerment. Her work has earned her a Chinese Canadian Community Leadership Award which recognizes her valuable contributions to both her Chinese and Canadian communities. Pan moved from Montreal to Guelph three and half years ago and has been a going concern ever since. As Guelph Youth Council's co-chair and its past director of communications and public relations, she has been a part of numerous community-building events. These include Guelph's Amazing Race, the Homeless Youth Shelter Silent Auction, the Multicultural Festival Youth Tent and the Speed River Clean Up. She has dedicated several hundred hours to the group and is incredibly involved with many community events. Not only active in the community, Pan excels academically as well. Her marks rank her in the top 1% of her grade, twice winning her the Top Student Award, along with multiple subject proficiency awards each year at Centennial. She has competed in and won many Science Olympic events, math contests, and also music competitions. Her outstanding achievements are recognized as a Shad Valley full scholarship recipient.

Sally Wismer steps down as executive director of the Guelph Arts Council at the end of the month. During her 22-year tenure with the umbrella arts group, her work has developed and enriched Guelph's cultural heritage. She has had a long relationship with the Guelph and District Multicultural Festival. Wismer played an active role in helping the festival establish itself as a separate entity. She has been a major player in the festival's annual youth poster and writing challenge as well for more than 10 years. Through this, she has helped promote – and judge – the positive aspects of Guelph's multicultural diversity in city schools. In the broader picture, she helped establish Guelph's cultural hub – known as River Run Centre. She was also instrumental in creating an electronic cultural hub – known as guelpharts.ca. It is a one-stop website that features the rich and varied cultural arts community in Guelph and area. Wismer's contributions go beyond the arts community. Since moving to Guelph in the mid-1960s, she has played an active role in the community, including co-founding a co-operative preschool; working as volunteer chair of Guelph's community information centre; serving as a board member of the United Way Social Planning Council; and co-coordinating a local campaign working to save a downtown stone heritage building block.

Established in 2001, the Volunteer Centre of Guelph/Wellington has played a pivotal role in engaging individuals, businesses and organizations to work together in creating and celebrating a better community. The centre helped recruit more than 2,400 volunteers last year, it houses data on 1,200 essential local social services, and its Community Information Guelph service connects community programs to the people who are most in need. The volunteer centre's initiatives and educational programs have been instrumental in raising awareness of the talent and skills that new Canadians bring to this country. Through various initiatives the centre opens doors for volunteer and employment opportunities and helps new residents to Guelph and area become full contributors to their new community.

