**Recipients (with Write-ups)
16th Annual Upper Ottawa Valley Chamber of Commercce
Business Excellence Awards**

**Start Up Superstar:**Valley Eats

Valley Eats is well deserving of the Start Up Superstar Award. They have provided many employment opportunities, not only in the Pembroke/Petawawa area, but also throughout Renfrew County.
Prior to COVID-19, they provided a convenience service that many enjoyed, but once the pandemic came about, they became a service that was a necessity for so many who could not leave their home. Valley Eats also provided employment opportunities for those who lost their jobs due to the pandemic.
Valley Eats goes above and beyond not only for their employees, but also for their customers. They do what it takes to ensure everyone receives the highest quality of customer service, no matter how big or small the request may be.
 **Small Business of the Year (1 – 9 employees)**Nature’s Reality Botanical Blends

Prior to the pandemic they employed local employees and they ensured the best working conditions possible. They also went out of their way to do special things for each of those employees. This business has also reached out to other businesses in the area to collaborate on projects and to be a part of the local trade shows and craft shows. This business also took the time to reach out to so many people that were in pain or needing pain relief products. During a family member’s fight with cancer the owners even came to her home and brought soothing products for her radiation burns. Since the pandemic has begun Nature’s Reality has risen to the occasion and has been producing hand sanitizer for our local community. They have been providing first responders as well as others with this product at cost. They have also donated many bottles of this product.

**Medium/Large Business of the Year (10+ employees)**Hyska’s YIG

Hyska's are strong community supporters. The grocery store offers full service shopping to the community of Petawawa including On-line shopping with PC express. Both Val and Steve volunteer throughout the community. Val is the chair of (PBAN) and president of the Petawawa Rotary Club and Steve is proud to volunteer with the RC ATV Club as an area director as well as being a Rotarian. Val is a member of the Petawawa Ramble planning committee helping to bring business led tourism to Petawawa.
Their business reacted well during the Covid -19 crisis keeping the doors open for customers in their community. They provided extended service to the senior community with delivery to seniors in the greatest need. Hyska's employs over 130 employees in the community of Petawawa. Hyska's is proud to work closely with the Petawawa Pantry food bank, PC Childrens Charities and the RCSPCA as preferred charities. The team at Hyska's pride themselves in customer service excellence.
 **Employee of the Year**)
David Hipkin (Dad’s Taxi) posthumously

David was a phenomenal person and chauffeur. He never missed his shifts and always shows up with a smile and an eagerness to assist our community. He was very friendly and thoughtful and never hesitated when it comes to helping one of our customers, he went above and beyond for the customers we have and also for us as a team. Dad’s Taxi was very lucky to have Mr. Hipkin and we are honored to say it's TRUE. This man deserved to be recognized in our community and it is our hope he gets the recognition he greatly deserved.

**Best Community Impact Award**The Cupboard Helpers

The Cupboard Helpers was nominated because in a time of crisis and pandemic each of these individuals stepped to the plate and acted quickly when the call to help was put forth. Our frontline workers needed assistance and support while facing a world crisis and each of our members contributed in whatever way they could. The helpers started sewing masks, caps, headbands and more to keep our frontline workers in hospitals, long term care homes, in our community homes with seniors and in our retail establishments. We to this date have provided more than 1000 headbands, masks, caps, S- hooks, and crochet bands to these workers. All were donated by our helpers free of charge. We received donations of fabric, buttons, elastic, and more from other community members. On each piece we attached an inspirational message to each of the frontline workers to remind them of how much we care about them and support them.

**Professional Services Award**Jennifer Snider (Knowledge First Financial)

Jennifer exudes professionalism. She is an expert in her field and is beyond compassionate in what she does. She simply loves to help others. She is a firm believer that every child deserves an equal opportunity for a bright future. She helps parents with their children's post secondary education with putting families into an RESP (registered education savings plan) that helps with the cost of rising post secondary education. She works with the military families and around their securities and situations. She is an active member of the community with every event taking place and was a volunteer with the air cadets. She has started a page in Petawawa on facebook helping feed those in need. Families contact her if they need help with food, and she gets others in the community to help out. She is such a passionate and kind empath and is willing to help anyone and everyone who needs help. She is actively posting to hire and grow her team here in the valley.

**Excellence in Skilled Trades**
Roseburg Pembroke MDF

Roseburg Pembroke MDF has a very strong skilled trade’s team, and recognizes the need to further develop and grow this skillset to support the long term operation of a complex industrial facility such as ours. They employ more than 30 fully licensed tradespersons (millwrights, instrumentation & controls technicians, electricians, pipefitters, and operating engineers). In addition they currently have 5 millwright & 2 electrician apprentices in various stages of their apprenticeship program. They are also encouraging cross qualification – one fully licensed millwright & one fully licensed electrician are cross training as apprentices in the other discipline to increase their overall versatility. Development does not stop there - many of their skilled tradespersons are leaders at the plant and occupy Supervisory & Management positions. Roseburg feels it is important to advocate for local community programs that support tradespeople. This year they subsidized a bursary at Fellowes High School called “Roseburg-Pembroke MDF Skilled Trade ‘Project of the Year’ which was awarded to a graduate pursuing a post-secondary education in the skilled trades. They look to assist other initiatives where they can, such as participating in The Labour Market Group of Renfrew & Lanark’s skilled trade’s forum.

The dedication of their skilled trade’s team is paying off. With their expertise, they have helped increase Operational Up time by >10% in 2020, and doing it injury free! No small accomplishment.

**Excellence in Food or Hospitality**Whitewater Brewing Company

Whitewater Brewing Co.'s Lakeside Brew Pub is a treat for the senses. Not only do they use local ingredients, they make sure the consumer knows how local by indicating the farm on their menus. In line with the rest of their sustainability initiative, Whitewater always includes vegan options on their seasonal menus so that everyone can find something worthy of a rave review on the menu. Their dishes are the perfect combination of familiar and unique. Taking favourites and putting a really quality twist on them. Their response to COVID-19 is particularly impressive. Not only did they make the tough choice to close the pub before it was provincially mandated, they also adapted incredibly quickly to ensure that their community had access to safe and nourishing food through their drive-thru, but they also created Heat & Eat meals that families could take home for a reasonable price to help take the stress of life in a pandemic off. The cherry on top of their great food is their generosity.

**Creative & Marketing Services Award**Lotus City Media

Lotus City Media - operated by Creative Director Jake Neville, is a video production company located in Pembroke that serves clients throughout the Ottawa Valley. From commercial work, weddings, Real Estate and mini-documentaries, Lotus City strives to capture your business, activity or story in an effective and powerful way.

A passion project of Jake is the documentary series "The Valley Vive" that focuses on unique individuals that live in the Ottawa Valley. His hope with the series was to "spread a little joy, and shine a little light in the Valley I call home, with the once strangers I call family."

A good documentary filmmaker doesn't just listen or try to understand where someone is coming from. The story isn’t theirs to tell, it’s everyone else’s.

From his humble beginning as an Algonquin College TV Broadcasting student, to an up and coming producer, Jake along with his wife and daughter supporting him, hopes to continue capturing and sharing those stories that make the Ottawa Valley home.

**Lifetime Business Achievement Award**Linda and Jay McLaren

Jay and Linda owned/operated Sunset Nursery for 34 years. During their ownership they grew from a small person business to one that employed 25 employees during peak seasons. Jay recalls his Dad Donald once told him to “Take note – theses people from the surrounding community are doing you a service of buying from your business. Don’t ever take that for granted and always remember to give back to your community”.

Jay and Linda have certainly done that. They were proud members of the Upper Ottawa Valley Chamber of Commerce (which was the Pembroke & Area Chamber of Commerce back then).

Jay is a charter member of the Pembroke and Area Toastmasters. He served as President of the Pembroke Horticultural Society and was presented with a life membership of that organization as well as a Provincial Horticultural Association Service Pin. During his business career he was appointed to the Board of Directors for Pembroke Hydro and later became the first chair of the Board of the Ottawa River Power Corporation. He served as chair of Pembroke Planning advisory Committee for 10 years.

Jay is a proud member of the Kiwanis Club since 1989. He has served as President and Past President of the Pembroke Kiwanis Club and well as Lieutenant Governor for Division 13 of Eastern Canada and the Caribbean. He was proclaimed Distinguished Lieutenant Governor and became the Education Coordinator for leadership Training for club leaders across Eastern Canada and the Caribbean. He continues his work with the Kiwanis Club to this day. He has received numerous other awards for the Kiwanis.

Jay received the Upper Ottawa Valley Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year in 2007 and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Silver Medal in 2012.

His the past chair of Wesley United Church Council. He sings in the Wesley choir and in Valley Harmonizers Barbershop choir.

Jay taught and was a well-loved professor at Algonquin College for 23 years, during that time he was presented with the President’s prestigious Silver Medal recognizing excellence in student support and college leadership. In 2016 Jay was appointed as the Waterfront Campus representative to the Board of Governors for Algonquin College. He serves as the Chair of Academic and Student Affairs Committee and on the Executive Committee of the AC Board of Governors.

Jay’s attitude of being a leadership servant and his philosophy of “givers get back more than they can ever give” is one for all of us to embrace and practice.

Right beside her husband’s side is Linda who is also a very busy volunteer. Linda grew up in deep River and remembers driving to the big city of Pembroke to see the new Memorial Centre, and to referee high school basketball games between McKenzie and Champlain High Schools.

Linda graduated from the University of Toronto as a Dental Hygienist and then returned to the Valley once again settling back in Deep River. Her first involvement with volunteering was at Camp Lauren, a children’s camp on the Ottawa River where she was a Craft Leader for 10 years.

At Sunset Nursery, she worked in the greenhouses, particularly with the Perennials. To her it was very satisfying to help the customers plan their gardens, ensuring that had all they needed to keep their new plants thriving through the season. She learned customer service was an essential aspect of their business. During the winters and as Sunset expanded, Linda taught needlework classes in the Craft Room.

Always interested in the arts she soon became involved with the Canadiana Concert Series. As a rep of the Concert Series, she attended an Ontario Arts Council meeting with other from Pembroke’s Arts Community. The result was the founding of the Valley Arts Council. Linda served on the board and was chairman of the Arts Council for the last two of five years.

As their family grew, Linda became involved with Girl Guides starting as a White Owl for Brownies, she was a Guide Leader for the next nine years.

Sewing has always been a pastime of Linda’s, particularly sewing for children. She developed a small home business “Little Stitches” and was selling personalized clothing at the local craft shows.

At the time the city was examining its Arts and Recreation programming Linda served on an ad hoc sub-committee with representatives of sports and arts organizations. Together they prepared a report on the future of Arts and Recreation in Pembroke. The task took 18 months and resulted in a Master Plan for the City. She received a Service Award from the City of Pembroke for this work.

In the early days of Bernadette McCann House, Linda joined the Board of Directors and became the Chair of the Board.

In 1997 Linda graduated from Algonquin College with a diploma in Computerized Business Systems. She worked for eight years as an Accounting Assistant at the Community Care Access Centre. Following her retirement she kept busy at the Pembroke Public Library, reading at Children’s Story Time. As well she volunteered with residential programs at McCann House and supported the staff in the use of new computers.

Literacy Plus, a program under the auspices of the Ministry of training, Colleges and Universities, had an office in Eganville and asked Linda to serve on their Board of Directors. She eventually became the Chairperson, followed by three years as a Numeracy and Literacy tutor in the Pembroke and Petawawa area.

For the past 5 years Linda has thoroughly enjoyed serving as the Treasurer of the St Joseph’s Food Bank.

Linda feels that the most satisfying work is with volunteers because they love what they do and are passionate about their contribution to the community.

So you can clearly see why Jay and Linda McLaren are most deserving recipients of the Upper Ottawa Valley Chamber of Commerce Lifetime Achievement Award.