

2014 Community Award Winner- Paul Levac

Paul Levac is a retired teacher from the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, who has been working as a Youth Worker for New Beginnings Attendance Centre for ten years. Although Paul has retired from the teaching profession, he has been instrumental in assisting at risk, hard to place youth in being able to achieve their high school diploma.

Paul works closely with the schools to advocate for youth who are not enrolled or are under serviced. His teaching experience has been utilized when he works with expelled/ suspended students who are unable to access alternative programs. Paul will often provide home instruction to these youth. In working closely with the Catholic District School Board he has helped in developing education plans for youth who have consistently struggled. He has also assisted in creating behavior and safety plans.

One of the greatest accomplishments that Paul assisted with, to help at risk youth, would be the development of the literacy and tutoring program at New Beginnings. He laid the foundation for the Transitions Classroom. In liaising with the school board he was able to find a teacher willing to provide work for youth on probation who were unable to enroll in community school. The Transitions classroom is being promoted across the Province as a model program. Paul often engages with youth throughout their educational path, he has attended many graduation ceremonies for the youth he works with, often with the parents of the youth being absent.

Paul has been described as never turning his back on the youth, he is always there for them and makes them feel special. Often the youth continue to text, call and drop in long after their legal orders have expired. As a Youth Service worker Paul often goes above and beyond his role. Paul will often buy lunch and provides various other incentives, out of pocket, to help motivate and encourage the youth he works with to achieve their goals. Paul has been described as having a unique approach to delivering programs to youth at risk. On one occasion he took a handful of youth justice clients golfing as part of an anger management program. These youth had never played golf before. Paul used this as a teachable moment to highlight

appropriate and acceptable ways of dealing with frustrations they were experiencing while trying to learn a new sport. By the 18th hole the youth were demonstrating more effective coping skills. Paul's role has expanded, through his actions, from a service provider to encompass outreach work.

Paul has been known to frequently extend his support and service to the family and friends of the youth he is working with, often on his own time. He has assisted many families by informing them of funding opportunities, routinely finding various sources to donate furniture, housewares and clothing for these families in need and delivering it to their residence. Youth in the community have been known to show up to the attendance center asking for the guy who helps youth find employment. Paul appears eager to help shape the future of youth support workers by demonstrating his compassion, commitment and dedication. He often mentors the University and College students at the Attendance Center.

Paul is also an avid contributor to his community. He provides respite care and tutors youth on a regular basis. For years he has also hosted a Christmas dinner for underprivileged youth and their families at Assumption College Catholic High School on Christmas Day. Paul ensures that each youth who attends leaves with a gift, usually gift cards that he has procured from local businesses.

Paul has also been an active member of the basketball community in Windsor-Essex for over three decades. He has coached for more than twenty years. Paul has been acknowledged by the head coach of the University of Windsor's women's basketball team for helping local talent develop their skills to such an advanced level. Paul has often sought out youth with little family support and would actively fund raise and seek sponsors to enable these girls to play the basketball season and attend the tournaments. Additionally, Paul has helped players travel to meet with coaches and recruiters across Canada and the United States, often paying for flights to give them the opportunity to explore possible scholarships.

Paul would likely describe his greatest accomplishment as being a

father of four and grandfather of six. Paul was influential in his children's life as well. When they were younger he and his wife would take a family vacation and allow for each child to pick one friend whose family was financially limited to go with them. Paul often fostered within his children the same beliefs that he had about youth. He once told his daughter who is now a teacher, "don't ever be the teacher who is out of the school at 3:30, you stay until the kids don't need you anymore", his daughter relayed that the biggest lesson that he taught her was to be that teacher who has something for kids when they need it, citing an example of her father always having bread in his desk to make the kids who were hungry a sandwich. She further relayed that her dad always taught her not to attach shame when helping youth.

It is due to Paul's overwhelming dedication, commitment and belief in our youth that he is the winner of the 2014 Community Award for Youth Service.

Congratulations Paul!!