

## BEST VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATED

### B.E.S.T. (Bay St. George Extended Seniors Transportation)



On the 26 of November 2022 the Bay St. George Extended Seniors Transportation bus service had their first volunteer and partnership appreciation event at the Knights of Columbus in Stephenville. The event started with a moment of silence in honor of founder and valued customer, Gloria Downey, and BEST driver volunteer, Tony Hynes. We were saddened to hear they both passed away this year.

This Appreciation night was in part made possible because of the kindness of the band Timbuktu: Ray Skinner, Polly McCann, Andy Ryan, and Tom Fitzpatrick. They donated their time in delivering an awesome show that was enjoyed by all. Special thanks also to the Knights of Columbus and Faithful Navigator, Bob Miller for donating the venue and time. All medals and trophies presented were donated for this special recognition of a meaningful year that was completely volunteer driven.

Picture above includes some of the BEST Volunteers proudly displaying their well-deserved awards, front row left to right: Sherri Jones (Booking Volunteer, Bravest Booker Award), Paulette Campbell (Assistant Volunteer, Professionalism Award), Michael McCann (Board Chairman), Polly McCann (Board Secretary, Procedural Award), and Janet Jesso (board member, booking coordinator, Fate Award).

Center Row far left: Roxanne Rowsell (Driver Volunteer, Award for most hours Driven)

Back row left to right: Lenny Hann (Board Member, Driver coordinator, Mellow Award), Gary Jesso (Board Treasurer, Assistant Coordinator, Perseverance Award, Chairmans Trophy winner), Clyde Russell (Board Vice Chairman, Oracle Award), Francis Russell ( Driver Volunteer, Musician of the Year Award), Gerard Galton (Driver Volunteer, volunteer award), John Shears (Driver Volunteer, Award for most Accommodating), Brian Russell (Driver Trainer, Trainer of the year award), Ken MacDonald (Driver Volunteer, Award for most photogenic), and Ralph Wells (Driver Volunteer, Best Toonie Collector),.

Valued volunteers missing from the picture in no particular order: Ada Shave (Booking Volunteer, Sharpest Ear Award), Lynn Gaudet (Assistant Volunteer, Award for Outstanding Dedication &

Contribution to Senior's, Award for Most Hours Assisted), Fred Felix (Driver Volunteer, Award for best smile), Stan Harper (Driver Volunteer, Longest Drive Award), Gerald Carroll (Driver Volunteer, Volunteer Award), Lenny Tiller (Board Member, Award for Best Dressed), Draper Young (Driver Volunteer, SME Award), Mike Campbell (Driver Volunteer, Volunteer Award).

*Bay St George Extended Seniors Transportation (BEST)* is an incorporated non-profit organization operating under the *Age Friendly Community Initiative* which seeks to provide affordable transportation to seniors. BEST is a low cost, shared ride public transportation service that operates an 8 passenger and 4 wheelchair bus from Monday to Friday, pending volunteer availability, serving the communities of Port au Port East, Kippens, Stephenville, Stephenville Crossing, and St Georges. More than 3000 seniors will have access, including any requiring wheelchair accessibility twenty-five plus and over. To date we have transported over 900 seniors throughout these communities. None of this would have been possible without the volunteers listed above. We would like to celebrate these volunteers for their amazing accomplishments and thank them for their commitment.

For a transportation service like this to happen it also needs strong, supporting partners starting with the Government of NL donating the bus. Thanks to the Town of Stephenville for initiating this meaningful endeavor and continuing to be a valued partner in this community engagement commitment; to the Town of Kippens, a tremendous partner with a large customer base; to the towns of Port au Port East, Stephenville Crossing and St. George's for continuing their support. These five towns showed their commitment to seniors by partnering together to make application for the BEST bus and by demonstrating their loyalty by continuing major sponsorship. Special thanks to Mayor Tom Rose, Mayor Paul Noseworthy, Mayor Jim Cashin, Mayor Lisa Lucas and Mayor Conrad White along with all Councillors for supporting this vital "Age Friendly Initiative".

In addition, to these age friendly towns, there are businesses and non-profit organizations continuing their partnership and commitment to seniors. The Bay St. George Kinsman Club, Knights of Columbus, Arlims' Company, Indian Head CO-OP, Stephenville Lions Club, OK Tire, Hometown Furniture, Atlantic Edge Credit Union, and Containerized Sanitation all have committed to a major partnership with BEST again this year. Corner Brook Industrial, under the ownership of Glen Wells, when hearing of this Age Friendly Initiative happening in these towns, reached out and signed on as a Major Partner for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time.

The Bay St. George Extended Seniors Transportation (B.E.S.T.) and the seniors it serves also have valued partnerships with the Royal Canadian Legion and Stephenville Regional Museum, whom we would like to thank for their partnership contribution, plus allowing us to use their facilities to hold BEST meetings, and volunteer training. First Choice Vision, Coastal Glass, Canadian Tire Gas Bar, Stephenville Truck Center, Madore's Auto Services Limited, Florence Higgins, Jim Bathgate, Jim Sr. and Senator Ethel Cochrane also contributed helping make this age friendly project a success, not only for the seniors of the communities, but everyone in them. When we support the age friendly philosophy, we all come out winners.

BEST Board has made significant gains since their first meeting on November 23rd, 2020. Within that year governance documents and strategic goals were developed and implemented. To date we refined our operational skills and transported over 900 seniors with safety being paramount. We survived multiple waves of the Covid Pandemic and continue to follow the recommended safe practices as they evolve. We addressed every challenge head on. All volunteers and partners were recruited, solicited,

and trained. Volunteer recruitment continues to be a challenge. Because of our success in recruitment for this ongoing project, we may be making more runs in January.

Our end goal is to triple our current volunteer numbers to ensure the best quality of service for both customers and volunteers alike. A goal this year is to increase our partner base to secure the longevity of the service. Training is provided at no cost to the volunteer, and we are looking for more Volunteer Driver Assistants, Volunteer Bookers, and Volunteer Drivers. Training and certifying volunteer drivers will continue as the assistant and booking pool grows. Drivers who are willing to volunteer as an assistant and driver will be given preference in training. If you are a senior or someone that can commit to volunteer at least one day a month Monday to Friday in any of these capacities, please contact 709-649-4909 or email [BEST@STEPHENVILLE.CA](mailto:BEST@STEPHENVILLE.CA) for more information. We value an opportunity to speak with you. The same contacts can be used to schedule a booking as well. Check us out at BESTBUS.CA for more information.

Michael McCann Chairman BEST