

And the award goes to...

Active, vocal and engaged RNs
receive recognition for a job-well-done.

BY KIMBERLEY KEARSEY

Lisa Richter, co-chair of RNAO's Hamilton chapter, admits there's a bit of a crowd around the table when the local executive meets. But she's not complaining. In fact, she's proud of the many members who "stick around" after their term is done. She estimates there are about 30 RNs sharing the various executive roles in Hamilton, and boasts proudly that other RNAO chapters have approached the group to find out their secret to success.

Awarded *Chapter of the Year* in February, Hamilton members were on hand at RNAO's Annual Day at Queen's Park (QP Day) to accept their award. "This is recognition of a lot of those members who are really passionate," Richter said, crediting student involvement in political events such as QP Day as a key to their success. "Honestly, having students come to events like this...they don't go away. They stay on our chapter, which is awesome."

The *Chapter of the Year* award, one of three recognition awards handed out during QP Day, is given to the chapter

that best demonstrates commitment to the association by involving members in RNAO activities. "The Hamilton chapter has shown leadership this year by bringing MPPs to work, by developing a nursing week supplement in the local newspaper (*Hamilton Spectator*), and by communicating and engaging with members, and reaching out to the community," RNAO President David McNeil said, adding acknowledgement of the group's work on poverty at the local level. "Sometimes it's a slow process when you're working for change, meeting with politicians, advocating...and sometimes you don't know if you're getting anywhere," said Leanne Siracusa, a chapter member and one of the key organizers of several poverty events in Hamilton. "This means a lot because RNAO is recognizing that it is a slow process, and there's a lot that happens behind the scenes. It charges us up to continue and to keep going."

RN first assistants (RNFA) David Melmer and Matthew Dubuc were also charged

up after receiving their *Interest Group of the Year* award at the event. In fact, a "very surprised" Melmer, who is co-chair with Dubuc, said he didn't even know Dubuc had nominated the RNFA Interest Group for the honour. When he received notice of their win from the association's membership department, Melmer says he wondered to himself 'how did this happen?'

The *Interest Group of the Year* award is presented to the group that participates in RNAO activities, influences decision makers and demonstrates teamwork and leadership. "RNFA has a committed executive team that works together to speak out for patients and speak out for RNFAs," McNeil said before presenting the award. They are "in constant dialogue and communication with government, MPPs, members, media, suppliers, senior hospital administrators, and surgeons and physicians about the work of first assistants." During the past year, the interest group added a significant milestone to its advocacy work with the announcement of 100 per cent permanent



(L to R)
Helen Tindale,
Maureen Loft,
Lisa Richter,
Leanne Siracusa,
Matthew Dubuc
and Dave Melmer.

London RN receives prestigious fellowship

Maureen Loft wants to better understand how clients with Type 2 diabetes cope with stress. An NP with the diabetes and endocrinology program at St. Joseph's Health Care (SJHC) in London, she says it's one thing for health-care providers to acknowledge their client is stressed, but it's quite another to really understand what they're going through. As the newest recipient of RNAO's doctoral fellowship, an initiative of the association in partnership with the Government of Ontario, she'll be able to find out.

Loft will receive \$25,000 through the fellowship. She will use it to evaluate the impact of RNAO's *Best Practice Guideline for the Subcutaneous Administration of Insulin in Adults with Type 2 Diabetes*. Loft is only the sixth nurse to receive the fellowship since it was first introduced in 2004. "I'm very excited. I'm very appreciative," she said of the award. "RNAO does a wonderful job of supporting nurses and this proves that point."

Loft, who is pursuing her PhD through the University of Western Ontario (UWO) School of Nursing, began her career 23 years ago as a bedside nurse at SJHC. In 1999, she completed her master's degree at UWO and went on to study as an NP in 2002 at the University of Toronto. She is an active member of RNAO, NPAO, the London Region Advanced Practice Nurses, and is the past-president of the Canadian Orthopaedic Nurses Association.

funding for RNFA's who were part of a pilot project that began in 2006. They are now working to expand access to RNFA's across the province.

"It's very rewarding since we're such a small group," Melmer said, noting they've been hard at work raising awareness of the role for ten years. "It's a job that really isn't fully understood or recognized throughout the province and it's slowly come very-much to the forefront. I'm very excited."

For Helen Tindale, recipient of the *Leadership Award in Political Action*, being 'recognized' by others, particularly politicians, is something she's become quite adept at ensuring. "In Helen's typical, quiet and humble way, she suggested we nominate our chapter (for an award)," her nominators wrote in their letter to RNAO. "Instead, we would like to nominate Helen. Acknowledging accomplishment, sharing success and mentoring leadership are only some of Helen's outstanding characteristics."

The *Leadership Award in Political Action*

is given to a member who participates in political action that improves health or positively profiles the profession. "Helen has been a long-standing activist with RNAO in many roles – as a public health nurse, as a workplace liaison, and as a crucial part of the Wellington chapter team," McNeil said. "Helen speaks out on issues that aren't always comfortable to those in power. In her nomination, Helen's colleagues recall how an MPP walked out of a meeting when she mentioned the Walkerton tragedy. Through her mentorship and encouragement, Helen is developing another generation of politically aware and active nurses."

"It's very humbling because all that I've learned is through RNAO," Tindale said. "We need to be there...to be visible." This passion for political action is something she says her loving husband has noticed in her as well. In fact, when he heard she would take home the honour, he proudly congratulated her for winning the "sh*t-disturber" award. **RN**