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Unsung B.C. heroes honoured for achievements

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British Columbia's local heroes, some well known but most unsung, were honoured in Victoria on Wednesday as they received B.C. Achievement Awards in recognition of the selfless work they do for their communities.

Some 44 B.C. Achievement Community Awards were presented to 46 British Columbians by Premier Gordon Campbell and Keith Mitchell, chairman of the B.C. Achievement Foundation, during a ceremony at Government House.

"It really is an award of excellence, and when [recipients] receive that medal, they're very proud," said Ron Lou-Poy, a Achievement Foundation director.

Nora Newland, executive director of the foundation, added that when she informs many recipients that they are receiving awards, they are surprised to learn they were even nominated.

"'I don't do this for the recognition' is a common reply that I get," Newland said.

However, she added that the B.C. Achievement Foundation was conceived by Campbell as a mechanism to reach people who work selflessly to make their communities better places to live.

"[It would be difficult to] single one out, they all have done so much in their own fields [of expertise]," Newland added.

Recipients include Simon Jackson, the young environmentalist and champion of the unique white Kermode, or spirit bear; Hari Varshney, the Vancouver capitalist and philanthropist nominated for his work on the St. Paul's Hospital foundation and the India Club; and Goh Ballet founders Choo Chiat Goh and Lin Yee Goh.

Others are local industrialists who have strived to help their small towns thrive, such as Peter Pelton of Clearwater, John Ryan of Terrace, and John Brink of Prince George.

There are youths, like Surrey's Monty Raisinghani, who founded a Christmas dinner at his high school and organized a telethon to raise money for tsunami relief; and 12-year-old Jeneece Edroff from Victoria who started a penny drive that has raised almost \$350,000 for Variety.

Anita Dadson was recognized for 30 years of advocacy work on behalf of the disabled in North Vancouver, and Geordie Salle of Barriere was honoured for lifetime commitment to his community in raising 18 foster children.

"You don't realize the extend to which there are people in British Columbia who work so hard for the benefit of others," Newland said.

The B.C. Achievement Foundation, on April 20, gave a special award to the tiny north coast first nations community of Hartley Bay for its selfless and overwhelming response to help

rescue and look after survivors following the March 22 sinking of the BC Ferries vessel Queen of the North.

The community awards form just one of the Achievement Foundation's three recognition programs. The others are the creative achievement awards and the award for Canadian non-fiction literature.

A full list of the 2006 B.C. Achievement Community Award recipients can be found on the Web at www.bccanwest.com/news/article_2006_04_26_5944.html.

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