

# SHINE 2015



What do a new Canadian, a pastor, a coach, a CEO, an environmental advocacy group and a man who loves good beer all have in common?

The answer: they all care about community. Specifically, they give back to Banff in meaningful and creative ways by doing their best to make this place a smarter and more caring town to live, work, and play in.

In its fourth year, SHINE celebrates people who make our community brighter and warmer. Excited to announce this year's honourees, the SHINE committee

(the Banff Canmore Community Foundation, Town of Banff, and Banff Ideas Bank) invites you to learn more about the folks who share, help, inspire, nurture, and enrich our community.

Introducing the first installment of honourees: Hernan Argana, Kevin Driver, Michael Geertsema, Pete Grottenberg, Connie MacDonald and the Green Team. Pick up next week's Rocky Mountain Outlook for the second installment of honourees and don't forget to save the date: this year's SHINE celebration is Thursday, Nov. 5 at 7 p.m. in the Banff Community High School gym. **Shine on**



## Hernan Argana

Sometimes when living in a place renowned for its beauty, it's easy to focus on the mountains, lakes, and sunrises that define our surroundings.

Then a person like Hernan Argana comes along and reminds us why we really love where we live – the people. Just like those mountains, lakes and sunrises, Argana has a way of making those around him feel at peace.

Always smiling, Argana is able to stay sunny through some of the most difficult situations: like living apart from his family for seven years while he worked hard to become a permanent resident of Canada while saving up for his daughter's non-elective heart surgery back home in the Philippines.

A testament of his character is the \$500 that was collected unbeknownst to him by Western Union store staff to help Argana cover the medical costs of the surgery; an act of kindness that made him realize Banff was his home.

Reunited with his wife Lady Anne and two daughters Hershey Anne and Hershey Ynan in 2012, Argana began to pay it forward and back to the place that supported him when he needed it by volunteering for the Town of Banff's after school program while teaching students how to play basketball, despite working two jobs.

"Hernan is truly a role model in our community," said Jeanie Godfrey, who works in settlement services for the Town of Banff. "Though his contributions may not be visible to many, they are felt deeply and subtly. Hernan epitomizes the shining qualities that make him such a vital part of our community, now and in the future."

Godfrey says that even a brief encounter with Argana will leave a person putting his or her own life into perspective: he works hard, but has time to volunteer.

"He makes time to share with those around him in a gentle way that makes people feel immediately comfortable. When we watch him during our after school program, he is so encouraging with absolutely no judgment – he makes everyone feel special."

For Argana, he's just contributing back to a community that he says gave him so much.

"Volunteering is a great opportunity to give back what Canada gave to my family. The community provided me with help when I didn't know what to do," he says. "It's the people who live here who make this place beautiful."



## Kevin Driver

Pastor Kevin Driver is a welcoming face at Banff's Full Gospel Church.

A vital link for newcomers to the area, he has played an integral role in integration and inclusion for immigrants by extending his congregation and a helping hand for all.

Before the valley had a formal Settlement Services, Driver was a key piece of an informal partnership that led to the Bow Valley Immigration Partnership, a collective of community groups, businesses, governments, and individuals working together to ensure integration into all aspects of community life for newcomers – socially, culturally, and economically.

"We realized that as temporary foreign workers wanted to stay, there was not enough support to make that happen, so we all began to work together and find ways to close those gaps," Driver says. "Community collaboration is not always about reinventing. It's about taking what is already there and making it work together."

A Banff resident since 1999, Driver remains humble about his contributions.

"I don't think that what I do should be considered work. It's the idea that you are called to serve, called to do what's right of you. As your community flourishes, you flourish; as it thrives, you thrive. Giving back is investing."

Driver is working towards a doctorate of ministry in rural community development with a thesis focused on welcoming and belonging. It's a study on integration, social cohesion and giving and is based on his work in the Bow Valley. He recently presented his findings to the Saskatoon Theological Union at the University of Saskatchewan in front of professors and an audience. His next step will be to present to other rural communities.

Originally from Edmonton, Driver's father died when he was young and his mom raised four sons on her own, still finding time to contribute to homelessness initiatives in the city. Inspired by this commitment to community, Driver has also been an active leader in the Homelessness to Housing Initiative, Bow Valley Day Care, Bow Valley Victim Services and volunteer chaplain at Banff Mineral Springs Hospital.

"I always tend to be where I am, 100 per cent where I am. I seek the prosperity and peace of place. As you build community, you are community," he says.

"Where I see I can be useful, I get involved. I can't change the world, but I can look for small things to do that make a difference."



Craig Douce RMO photos

## Michael Geertsema

Michael Geertsema is a calm, cool, collected kind of guy.

You have to be in order to keep up with all the sports and recreation clubs he's committed to. Genuine and humble, he puts in an enormous amount of time and effort in support of youth in the community.

A former varsity volleyball player, Geertsema is in his fifth year coaching the Banff High School junior boys team. With practices, games and tournaments, he spends two to three days a week working to incorporate a fun and inclusive style that gets every kid a chance to play.

"I decided to start coaching because I always had community coaches helping out and I appreciated that; now it's my turn."

While volleyball has long been a favourite pastime, he only began kayaking in 2009 after an introductory course got him hooked. In addition to earning his coaching qualifications, Geertsema has taken a hands-on approach to board structure and club operations, working his way onto the Bow Valley Kayak Club executive committee and currently sitting as club president.

Eager to inspire more youth into the sport, he has focused his time on growing club membership. He has done so not only in numbers, but also in ability. For example, this year, four paddlers went to nationals and two won at the Alberta Cup.

"Kids are getting 30 to 40 days on the water. It's great to see them start out as tentative kids on small waves to progressing to where they are now," he said.

Before moving to Banff, Geertsema was living in Lake Louise and working as lifestyle coordinator for the Fairmont Chateau, helping staff find recreational activities in an isolated community. He volunteered his extra time at the Lake Louise Recreation Centre coordinating softball and hockey. He also played a significant role in supporting Canada Day fundraising festivities.

Geertsema has also been involved with the Banff Curling Club since 2012. After joining a team without any past history with the sport, he slowly worked his way up to skip. He was eventually nominated to be treasurer of the club and also lends a hand scheduling the men's league.

"These clubs and organizations are so welcoming. They put a lot of time and effort into the things that we love," he says. "I don't just want to just ask from my community, I also want to give back. It's nice to feel connected in that way."



### Green Team

While they are officially called the Green Team, this Banff Community High School-based environmental advocacy group is also a dream team.

Comprised of students, the Green Team has been creating solutions for better local environmental practices since 2003, when a group of students began to produce and test biodiesel in their science class.

With the guidance of science teacher Michelle

Macdonell, students were convinced biodiesel fuel was more environmentally friendly and presented their findings to the Canadian Rockies Public School board. From there, all CRPS buses switched to biodiesel fuel and were even retrofitted with catalytic converters to further reduce emissions.

From this science class project turned real-life solution, the Green Team was established in 2005.

Ten years later, more than 70 students have volunteered with the Green Team alongside their sponsor Maya Capel

on several projects: "We raise awareness to help to inspire the community to be more environmentally conscious through education, example, and use," Capel said.

With the help of community partners like Parks Canada, Canada Post, the Town of Banff and businesses like the Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel, the 2014 Alberta Winter Games and Bullfrog Power, the Green Team is leading the way.

For example, the group was instrumental in installing a paper-recycling depot outside the post office, creating a convenient place for Banffites to recycle. The Green Team also spearheaded a rain barrel initiative whereby donated barrels were refitted into rain barrels to collect rainwater for watering use. They've also fundraised to have two water dispensers on campus, volunteered at toxic waste roundups, and knocked door-to-door to give residents compostable bags.

Most recently, in January 2014, the Green Team celebrated the installation of 36 solar panels on the roof of the high school.

But what has some Green Team alumni most excited is that the legacy lives on.

"It's just incredible to see how much it's grown and that students are so interested," said Lara Buchmann-Duck, a Green Team student from 2009.

Even the easy wins are just as important as bigger picture projects when it comes to encouraging fellow high school peers to support the cause (for example, turning off lights and recycling).

"Every little bit counts. The small things do make a difference."



### Pete Grottenberg

With a laugh as big and overflowing as his heart, Pete Grottenberg is the definition of hoppy go lucky.

For instance, new to town in April 2013, he thought

it was so cool how passerby knew the names of his basset hounds (Jasper and Molly) from frequenting the Banff dog park for only a week, even though these neighbours hadn't yet committed his and his wife Stephanie's name to memory yet. And as the Banff Brewing Co.'s general manager, he and his team help to spill the love to all sectors of the community through its charity of choice beer initiative called Community On Tap.

Starting with the Snow Days Ale, which saw Rocky Mountain Adaptive Sports as the benefactor to Highline Magazine's Naked Nut beer, with proceeds going back into local arts and culture, Grottenberg says supporting those who are trying to make a difference means the world to him.

"How can we not get involved? This community is so engaged, you can't get away from it."

And the community appreciates this generosity, as Banffite Meagan Stewart attributes Grottenberg to turning the brew pub into a community hub (through its beer club and mountain film nights) as well as true social enterprise.

"For Pete, it seems that rather than conflicting with his business interests, community support is an

underlying and complimentary value. To my mind, that is a fantastic example of how we can all shine in our day to day lives," Stewart says.

Having lived in Calgary, Victoria, Vancouver, Vernon, Jasper, Edmonton, Ottawa and now Banff all in the last 12 years, the Grottenbergs are excited to call Banff home.

"We love the mountains — we sold our house, our truck, and said we would figure it out. Living here is so amazing so we asked ourselves 'why are we trying to chase something in the city?'"

Grottenberg is also currently working on his MBA from Royal Roads University in Victoria on top of his general manager duties and Stephanie works for Parks Canada. In their downtime they save their Sundays for skiing, snowboarding, biking, or hiking together. And depending on the mood of the occasion, he suggests black pilsners for drinking on patios and IPAs when the feeling is more festive. He also credits his company for allowing him the freedom to make these community connections.

"It wouldn't be possible without this company. They say 'yes — this is community — go!' The relationships I help to create here will last longer than me."



### Connie MacDonald

On any given day as YWCA Banff CEO, Connie MacDonald can be found presenting to Banff town council, fundraising to potential donors, or advocating

for programs and services.

She can also be found helping to clear dishes in the YWCA Mountain café. It's this willingness to step in and step up that has given MacDonald insight into all aspects of the organization, an involvement that makes her job of two years that much more rewarding.

"You have to be curious, willing to learn, know when to ask for help and surround yourself with the best people," MacDonald said of being in a leadership role.

MacDonald is overwhelmed by the response the Y has received in terms of support from the community, especially when it comes to events like Walk a Mile in Her Shoes, VINEArt, and Women of Distinction, as well as projects like the renovation of the Bow Valley Women's Emergency Shelter and the Gingerbread House.

"The Bow Valley is a generous community and I'm constantly inspired by the willingness of individuals and businesses to share their time, talent and treasure."

It's also about sharing stories, said MacDonald, even though subjects like domestic violence and sexual assault tend to be conversation stoppers at the dinner table.

"When people understand the story of abuse or

violence against women in our community and we are able to create a path for them to get involved, the support follows."

MacDonald first came to Banff when she was 17, where she worked as a ski host at Sunshine Village and a lifeguard for Parks Canada. Then, after graduating from Dalhousie University with a degree in psychology, she returned to the mountains. Since then, she's worked in Family and Community Support Services at the Town of Banff as a community development coordinator, as special assistant to the president and director of communications at The Banff Centre, and as director of people at CMH Heli-Skiing and Summer Adventures.

When she's not working, MacDonald enjoys skiing in winter and cottage life in summer with her husband Tom and son Casey.

"I feel fortunate to have grown up in Banff and to watch my son embrace the lifestyle that helped to shape my outlook on life. I have a supportive network of friends, a challenging job that taps my head and my heart, and a community that I am very proud of. For me, it doesn't get any better and for this, I am grateful."