



Agent Julie Bondy stands outside a new home on St. Francis Crescent in LaSalle. Homes in the Seven Lakes Golf Course neighbourhood sell between \$600,000 and \$1 million. NICK BRANCACCO

# Grants provide spark to Canada 150 celebrations

DAVE BATTAGELLO

A digital dig into the past, an enhancement of aquatic habitat at an abandoned marina and the restoration of a naval monument are among eight projects local groups received funding for Monday from the Windsor Essex Community Foundation as part of celebrations for Canada's 150th anniversary.

The eight recipients receiving an overall total of \$74,000 were the Windsor Symphony Society, University of Windsor, County of Essex, Town of Tecumseh, Essex County Field Naturalists' Club, Royal Canadian Naval Association, the Harrow and Colchester South chamber and the Town of Lakeshore.

The University of Windsor will use its funding to launch Digging and Imag(in)ing Windsor-Essex History: 150 Years and Beyond, which will involve digging through history figuratively and literally, using technology to scan below the earth to create images from the area's past and linking them with artifacts and photos.

The Essex County Field Naturalists' Club will use its grant to transform an abandoned marina near Point Pelee National Park into a wildlife habitat area by enhancing conditions both in the water and on land. The amount of Carolinian forest will be enhanced.

The Royal Canadian Naval Association will use its grant to update

a 22-year-old monument to honour Canadians who served in the Royal Canadian Navy in the Cold War and Afghanistan.

"We are so pleased to get the money," said Tom Bain, who accepted cheques on behalf of both the county as warden and Lakeshore as mayor.

"We have been working on committees to get programs in place to celebrate Canada's 150th, but it's an area where we don't have a lot of money to do that. This helps allow us to have one huge day to celebrate."

The foundation's funds will largely be used to bring in more and higher-calibre entertainment

“Feeling of gratification because you often forget how many different organizations in our community provide help.

for the celebrations, he said.

"The foundation is just excellent in the work that they do," Bain said. "It's not just about helping celebrate Canada's 150th, but they are

out there helping so many organizations, such as special needs children or helping other programs that help people."

It was an arduous selection process since there were \$300,000 in requests among applicants the foundation's selection committee had to assess.

"It was difficult for us because everyone had exceptional applications," said Loretta Stoyka, who heads the foundation's selection committee.

"We decided to cover the whole county and assist a wide variety of groups, which included First Nations, youth and armed services. We tried to encompass everyone, so we can all feel we are celebrating together."

Stoyka is in her fifth year as a director with the foundation and takes great joy in being help to help so many groups across the local area.

"It gives you such a feeling of gratification because you often forget how many different organizations in our community provide help," she said.

"We try to help organizations who promote the good in our community."

The funding support by the foundation on Monday was on top of a previous \$100,000 handed out in November to nine other community groups, also in connection to activities related to Canada's 150th. dbattagello@postmedia.com



Soaring prices in the Toronto area has Samantha Costa-Branget, left, Jeff Branget, Stephanie Costa, Charlotte Costa-Branget and Hayden O'Reilly moving to Tecumseh from Milton in July.

## House sold for \$100,000 above asking price

HOUSING FROM A1

In fact, just a week ago, Bondy sold a home in LaSalle for \$100,000 over list price. Also, Bondy recently sold a house to an eager out-of-town buyer by showing it to him through FaceTime on her smartphone as she walked through the house.

Low interest rates and a low unemployment rate are factors, said Bondy, as are the relatively affordable prices compared to Toronto. But she also believes people find much to like locally, with Detroit next door, an airport, nice weather and more.

"People from Toronto are all paying off their mortgages or having very low mortgages by coming here," she said.

"So they're able to live very nicely in this area.

"And it's not just retirees. Families are moving down here now. We're seeing more of that in the last six months."

Bondy said her husband, Jovan Vujovic, who owns Signature Homes Windsor, also fields increasing interest from the Toronto area for the new homes he builds, such as in a new subdivision near the Seven Lakes Golf Course.

Kim Gazo, president of the Windsor-Essex County Association of Realtors, said serious shoppers have even recently started coming from further afield than Ontario.

"We're even seeing investors from Vancouver, who didn't usually make it this far before," Gazo

### RISE IN PRICES

The hot housing market in Windsor and Essex County has driven home prices up, according to the Windsor-Essex County Association of Realtors.

**Average sale price, May 2017:** \$282,134

**Average sale price, May 2016:** \$235,011

**Most popular home styles:** bungalow/ranch (235), two-storey (139), 1½-storey (107), raised ranch/bi-level (105), and 1¼-storey (37).

Source: Windsor-Essex County Association of Realtors

said. "They tended to stop in Toronto. I was surprised because it's pretty far to go. But we've got a lot to offer in Windsor, so why not?"

Numbers from the Windsor-Essex County Association of Realtors show Windsor-area home prices on a roll. In May, 791 properties sold for an average of \$282,000, compared to \$235,000 in May 2016.

What's more, Gazo predicts the hot housing market will remain on fire for a while.

"Things are going really well," Gazo said. "But there is still enough room for people to list their house. It's a great time. There are a lot of buyers and not enough inventory for them."

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David Lozinsky, left, Ron Sitarz, Robert Franz, Don Guthrie, Paul Pratt and Tom Bain gather in front of the Capitol Theatre on Monday after the WindsorEssex Community Foundation announced a second round of recipients for the Community Fund for Canada's 150th Grant Program. NICK BRANCACCO

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