

2018 Award of Merit Recipient - Barb Rowlandson

In June of 2013 the first “Ontario’s Best Butter Tart Festival” was held in Midland. Over 10,000 butter tarts were sold within hours of the start of the festival. By noon there wasn’t a single surviving butter tart in downtown Midland. It was then that the potential of the “Ontario’s Best Butter Tart Festival” and its benefits to the Town’s tourism and local businesses became apparent.

The festival came about because Barb Rowlandson had an idea. She gathered a couple of supporters and set out to establish the first “Ontario’s Best Butter Tart Festival”. Barb worked to get the permissions and support required to close a street for a day. She sought out sponsors and vendors and helped to organize the advertising, marketing and promotions needed to make the festival a success. On the day of the festival she was everywhere dealing with the hundreds of issues that naturally occur in an event of this magnitude.

For the first few years Barb led the event with the help and support of the Downtown Midland Business Improvement Area, the support of her friends and a growing group of enthusiastic volunteers.

Since its inception the festival has grown dramatically. Last summer, the 6th “Ontario’s Best Butter Tart Festival” attracted an estimated 65,000 people. The 200 participating vendors sold somewhere upwards of 150,000 butter tarts. But the success of festival goes beyond the one-day celebration. The festival has immensely helped Midland’s tourism efforts. It has drawn comment on radio and TV stations and media outlets across the province. It has even been mentioned in the New York Times. The coverage generated is far beyond anything that the Town could have anticipated or afforded to buy.

Thanks to Barb’s vision and her persistence we have an event we can all take pride in - an event that brings a great many benefits to the Town.

It is my pleasure to present the Award of Merit to Barb Rowlandson – queen of the butter tart.