

people



Doug McDougall (left) and Rick Gibbings (right) receive their medals from Richard Rohmer (centre).
PHOTO SUPPLIED BY DOUG MCDUGALL

exemplary service IN HARRISTON

PHOTOS AND STORY BY MELODY WREN

“For a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people’s love and concern for each other.” – Millard Fuller

People like Doug McDougall and Rick Gibbings make their communities stronger and healthier. These two men have recently been awarded the Governor General’s Exemplary Service Medal for their extraordinary commitment as Medical Technicians based out of Harriston.

Doug believes he has the best job in the world. “No day is the same,” he says. “I look at each day as a learning experience because you are always learning something new.” His co-worker Rick, or Doc as he prefers to be called, agrees. “There’s always an adventure, some more interesting than others,” he says.

The award is given to paramedics who have given over 20 years of service, which Doug laughingly refers to as the “longevity award.” Those 20 years must include at least 10 years in the performance of duties involving potential risk and exceptional community service certainly doesn’t hurt. So far Doug and Doc are two of only 1,000 Ontario medics to have received the Emergency Medical Services Exemplary Service Medal since its creation in 1994.

Doug moved from Guelph to Fergus 29 years ago to live close to Emergency Medical Services (EMS) base. He was hired full time right out of college and volunteered with the Fergus Flippers swim team, and helped to fundraise for the Community Centre expansion. Doc started out as a nurse in Los Angeles, eventually moving back to Ontario. He made the

transition to emergency work full time in 1990, a change he said “wasn’t difficult and a lot more fun,” and the job left him time to volunteer with several teams in Palmerston.

The awards ceremony took place at Deerhurst Resort in Huntsville, where Doc spent his honeymoon many years ago, while Doug celebrated his 31st anniversary there only last year. In front of 700 people, Captain Richard Rohmer, the most decorated citizen in Canada and honorary chief of the Toronto EMS, presented their awards. “It was neat to be part of,” says Doug who “felt honoured to be included in a group where people are really dedicated to their profession.” Doc, who is equally modest, added that “it was pretty exciting and almost surreal, but nice to be recognized. If you know you’ve done a good job, it’s easy to relax.”

After long but rewarding days, both escape to the calm oasis of home. Doc and his wife are putting the finishing touches on a new home in Harriston. The house is a bungalow with a wrap around front porch and a hot tub right outside the master bedroom. Doc spends a lot of time outside

and has a passion for woodworking. He’ll have a separate workshop built on the property.

Doug says he is “always glad to get home to talk over the day” with his wife, who, as a nurse, understands his need to decompress. They both like the outdoors and have several flowerbeds to tend through the summer. Doug is always taking on home projects but knows when to call in the professionals. He and his wife have just finished renovating their home. Doug did all the demolition himself and enjoyed every minute of it. They love their new kitchen. “The kitchen is the hub of all activity with a huge island that we call Manitoulin,” Doug says, adding, “I am always happy to walk in the door.” **OH**

