

## The 2016 Volunteer of the Year Award Recipient

A mother's decision to take a break from her nursing career to stay home with her young sons was a fortunate one for OCTC.

Catherine Fyfe and her dentist husband, Jonathan Mayer, had relocated from Kingston to Ottawa in 2004 for him to take over a dental practice. Their sons were in half-day junior kindergarten and Grade 2 and Catherine decided to stay home "for a bit" to help the boys settled into their new city and new routine.

By 2007, both boys were in school all day, but at different schools with different schedules. To give her flexibility and a change from classroom volunteering, Catherine decided to look for opportunities to volunteer in the community.

She read in her neighbourhood newspaper about a need for volunteers in the lunch program at the Smyth Road OCTC site. Walking distance from her Alta Vista home, the Smyth location and opportunity to work with children, was a perfect fit.

Since April 2007, Catherine has volunteered close to 700 hours at OCTC, first in the preschool program and currently at the OCTC school, as well as a couple of stints in the pool with the school's swim program and recreational therapy swimming. Her commitment to OCTC was recognized in April when she was awarded the Robert L. McGibbon Volunteer of the Year Award for 2016.

After 15 years as a nurse, specialized in pediatric nursing and experienced in community care and public health, the Queen's University nursing graduate brings exceptional skills to her commitment to OCTC programs and clients.

"I enjoy working with children and feel comfortable with special needs children," she says.

While immensely rewarding for Catherine, her nine years as an OCTC volunteer have been a huge benefit to OCTC.

"I can't say enough about her," says OCTC teacher Lyn Cleofas, who nominated Catherine for the award on behalf of the school team. "She is reliable and cheerful and a welcome presence in our classroom."



OCTC Volunteer of the Year Award recipient Catherine Fyfe (middle) with Dawn Paxton, Board Vice Chair (left) and Kathleen Stokely, CEO

**Catherine's commitment to OCTC has come to be "what I do from September to June," she says. "I really enjoy the rapport that develops with the children over the course of the school year; observing and helping them with their growth and development skills."**

The OCTC students develop an equally strong bond with Catherine. "She has a beautiful nature with the children and they are always thrilled to see her," says Lyn. "Catherine always works evenly and fairly with our students and never shies away from a child who is having a difficult day, a challenging moment or a runny, sneezy nose."

The need to be a "stay-at-home Mom" is long past for Catherine, with her eldest son in first year physics and math at McGill and the youngest in Grade 10, but she is no less committed to her OCTC family. And to taking the two family Australian shepherd dogs, Rio and Onyx, out for the runs they love so much.