



# THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR'S COMMUNITY SPIRIT AWARD NOMINATION

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## Shearwater

Groups within the community who have joined together to put forward this nomination:

1. Halifax & Region Military Family Resource Centre
2. Personnel Support Programs – Community Recreation
3. Shearwater Community Council
4. Chaplains Maritime Forces Atlantic

### **Introduction:**

The Shearwater community has a long, colourful and vibrant history. It is the second oldest military aerodrome in Canada, established in 1918 by the US Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force. It served a vital role in both World Wars, and has been an active community and military base throughout its history. Since 1963, Shearwater has been home to Sea King helicopter squadrons and has been involved in many peacekeeping and humanitarian operations locally and abroad.

The Shearwater community is demographically and culturally diverse, it includes people and families of all ages and lifestyles, from all over Canada. Unlike most communities Shearwater is ever changing with families coming and going each year. Military postings mean that Canadian Forces members and families spend as little as three years in a community, which can make achieving a sense of community a challenge. Despite any challenges, given the resilience and strength that military families are known for, 12 Wing Shearwater is a dynamic community with a strong sense of pride, commitment, community stewardship and volunteerism. Shearwater volunteers can be found everywhere throughout the community from organizing family activities, service groups, sports teams to community recreation, church groups, cubs, brownies etc. Over the years Shearwater volunteers and families have also donated thousands of hours to numerous large community events and activities and have made significant financial contributions to Christmas Daddies, United Way and the Nova Scotia International Air Show. In fact in 2007, the 12 Wing contribution to the DND United Way Campaign is currently at \$56,115.38.

The challenges CF families' face coming to a new city and province and trying to get established in a strange community can be daunting to anyone, but when you toss in the added challenges of a deployment, this is what really makes Shearwater unique. Military families do not have the same opportunity to grow the roots that many other communities have. With no extended families, no common history, few nearby friends, many of our families arrive knowing nothing about the province or community. But the families and neighbors in this community know first hand what its like to move so this inclusive community eagerly welcomes each new arrival and quickly gets them connected and involved.

Many people within the Shearwater community also keep in touch and form lasting friendships which endure long after they leave the area. The Shearwater community even keeps connected in the many 'online' communities available. Popular online networking site Facebook, has over 50 groups dedicated to Shearwater, its clubs and activities, schools and the community itself.

While often challenging, the military lifestyle instills incredible strength within its members and families; the military family resource centre believes that military families are the strength behind the uniform which is the inspiration to nominate this amazing community for this award. These strengths have built an enduring community where several hundred and sometimes even a few thousand people participate in community events, activities, contribute to the community and show their incredible pride. Despite significant challenges, anyone who

experiences the Shearwater community can instantly see and feel the sense of community, inclusiveness and strength that exists within it. All of these features lead to the inspiration to nominate Shearwater for the Community Spirit Award.

#### **A Brief History of CFB Shearwater:**

Shearwater area is home to over 500 families, 60 single members and the place of employment for over 1200 military and civilian DND employees. In addition, many military families who utilize the base reside in the nearby communities of Eastern Passage, Cole Harbour, Cow Bay and Woodlawn. Also home to a fitness centre, arena, military family resource centre; chapel, youth centre, an aviation museum, wood hobby and yacht club It is an important Canadian military base with a long and illustrious part in Canada's and Nova Scotia's history. In recent years, the people of Shearwater played a vital role in support of many humanitarian and peacekeeping operations. These operations include:

OP FRICTION 1990-91; OP FLAG 1991; OP DELIVERANCE 1992-93; OP FORWARD ACTION 1993-94; OP SHARP GUARD 1993-97; OP ASSISTANCE 1997; OP DETERMINATION 1998; OP PERSISTENCE 1998; OP TOUCAN 1999-2000; OP APOLLO 2001- 2003; OPERATION ALTAIR – 2004.

Shearwater members and families have also been there to assist whenever their adopted community and city needed them. They have contributed to such efforts as Hurricane Juan cleanup, often with the CF member leaving their own families without power to go and assist other communities who needed them. Shearwater members and families also warmly welcomed Kosovo refugees and passengers stranded during 911 into their homes and community.

Shearwater members and families also played a significant role in the SwissAir Flight 111 recovery and support to Hurricanes Katrina and Nate, which provided aid in the southern United States. It is only through this amazing community's strength and commitment to support and care for their neighbor that CF members can confidently and on short notice leave their family behind to unselfishly serve others.

#### **Community Events:**

A large number of events and activities within Shearwater, keep the small community active and involved. Some highlights of the major events are:

##### **Strutting Your Stuff**

In March 2008, the Annual event in honor of International Women's Month took place at the Sea King Club in Shearwater. The event featured guest speakers, celebrities and a fashion show. The event was sold out and attracted women of a variety of ages from the Shearwater and surrounding communities. As an annual event, the upcoming session features even more community participation in the form of a community talent show.

##### **St Jean de Baptiste Day**

Organized by the francophone group at the MFRC, a community celebration of St Jean de Baptiste Day in June featured francophone foods, music, entertainment and socializing.

##### **PMQ Beautification Contest**

Each summer, the Shearwater Community Council spearheads a PMQ beautification contest which recognizes community members who enhance their residences in a variety of ways, from gardens to other decorative touches. A variety of community groups are involved in the judging for this fun activity which demonstrates the pride that members have in Shearwater.

##### **Family Fly Day**

In October, 2008, the Shearwater community organized Family Fly Day, which included participation by the base, the MFRC, PSP and other community groups. This gave over 700 people of all ages the opportunity to visit the wing, enjoy a BBQ, activities for the kids, ride in a SeaKing, and connect with other military family members. The event will be run annually for families of Shearwater.

##### **PMQ Christmas Decoration Judging:**

In December, the Shearwater Community participates in an annual decorating contest, organized by the Community Council. This contest is promoted throughout the community and homes are judged by other community members for their decorations.

### **Carol Fest**

Beginning in December 2007 a Carol Fest at the Shearwater chapel has brought together performers from young to old to create an evening of song and laughter for all members of the community. As the event continues to grow, new participants, youth and other community members have become involved.

### **Consignment Sales**

Offered two times per year at the Shearwater site of the MFRC, community members come in and sell reusable baby/children's clothing. This helps support the reduction of waste and helps community members find clothing and materials for their children, while getting a chance to socialize and connect with other members of the community.

### **Other events:**

Aside from these larger scale events, you can find everything from youth dances to scrapbooking marathons, children's play groups to church suppers in Shearwater. Through the groups and organizations listed below, along with the incredible community spirit, people of all ages contribute to the dynamic environment that is the Shearwater community.

### **Military Family Resource Centre Shearwater: (<http://www.halifaxmfrfc.ca>)**

The Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) was established in 1991, to provide programs and services for the families of Canadian Forces. Shearwater was a leader in getting programs running and connecting with the families of this community. Currently the Centre is located in the Hampton Gray Memorial Building, a former school where thousands of young military children were educated. Lt Robert Hampton Gray, based out of Shearwater was a Victoria Cross winner. The MFRC is a volunteer-based, non-profit organization, focused on the promotion of the health and well being of the individual, family and community. Our mission is to promote health and social well-being of individuals, families and communities who share the unique experience of military life.

The MFRC provides programs and services for the whole family, This includes:

- Full time daycare with 163 spaces
- Casual, before and after school childcare
- Programs for adults and families
- Youth Centre with over 200 youth registered
- Lighthouse Circle program for community members
- Youth dances and activities
- Special events
- Volunteer development and involvement

The MFRC believes that military families are the strength behind the uniform, and the Shearwater community is proof of that. Some highlights of the MFRC's programming in Shearwater that demonstrate the strength of community are:

### **The Youth Centre (<http://youth.halifaxmfrfc.ca>)**

Housed in the former post office the youth centre opened in 1999 and is dedicated to the youth of the community. The youth in Shearwater have consistently played a leading role in 'running' the centre. The Youth Committee is a dedicated group of teen volunteers who work hard to make the Youth Centre what it is today. These youth, ages 8 – 18 are all from military families living in and around Shearwater. The Youth Committee assists with programming, planning, delivery acquiring resources, community service and fundraising. Each year the youth fundraise and collect for Feed Nova Scotia and other charities. Recently some needed renovations to the youth centre were completed, and the grand opening ceremonies included youth from the past and present who benefited from their experiences with the program. The common thread from these youth was their tremendous sense of pride and the value of having a place to call their own and immediately connect with their peers and feel like they belonged to this community.

*"The MFRC brings us something missing in so many other communities: a Youth Centre with fantastic programs, dedicated and caring leaders, and tones of happy smiles. Our kids love it, and so do we!"*

Other initiatives within the youth community are a volunteer tutoring. Volunteers also support the youth programming through programming, facilitation and more.

### **The Lighthouse Circle:**

Lighthouse Circle is a bi-weekly personal growth group connecting women living the unique challenges of the military lifestyle. This is a diverse group, some new to the community, some experiencing the deployment of a loved one for the first time, and others looking for more of a connection to the military family community. The MFRC assists with facilitation but the group has remained community driven well into its ninth year. Despite postings and the nature of change in the military lifestyle, the Lighthouse Circle remains active and growing today.

*"Attending Lighthouse Circle and other workshops at the MFRC really helped me find my path in life in a positive way. I guess I've always had it in me, but with the Centre's help I have been able to bring it out of myself and reach areas I never knew existed." Lighthouse Circle participant.*

### **Children:**

Children's programming within Shearwater is an extremely busy area and has added to the sense of community. Some activities include a family Easter Skate, Christmas Celebrations, Halloween parties and pre teen dances where well over 300 pre teens come to strut their stuff.

Participants:

*"We all need to be here for each other as a community."*

*"Military based, connecting to other mom/families experiencing deployment/work related separation/constant postings – any other playgroup doesn't have that."*

*"Now that I have a daughter I am amazed at what the centre really all has to offer in the line of programs for us as a family and a break for me when I most needed. Casual Care, is a place that I can drop my daughter off and know that I am getting the up most care for my daughter at a very reasonable price. My daughter just loves the staff that work in that room."*

### **Volunteering:**

One reason that the Shearwater Community has such strong community spirit is because so many of them volunteer. Military members and their families are incredibly active volunteers in and around their community. You can find them coaching sports teams, running clubs, fund raising for the United Way or other charities, at the MFRC or volunteering for hundreds of other local community agencies. For example, this past year the MFRC volunteer board of directors, contributed over 5000 hours, in addition CF members and families of 12 Wing contributed 10,000 hours of their time to assist the MFRC. MFRC volunteers participate by running programs, tutoring or welcoming new families through their welcome program.

*"I got involved with the military family resource centre 14 yrs ago when I first met my husband. I started out as a volunteer and remain to be one. There is no better place to give back my time to where they have given me so much support over the last 14 yrs, as a military spouse and now as a new mom. The programs are amazing and are so well organized. There is something for everyone. For me it's like family away from home. Everyone is extremely helpful and always cheerful and ready to listen with a open ear and a shoulder to lean on, I really don't know where I would be if I did not have this extended family to lean on, when my husband is away on deployment or even for shorter trips."*

Colleen Calvert, Executive Director of the Halifax & Region MFRC has been a member of the Shearwater community for several years, as a military member then as a volunteer on the Shearwater MFRC Board of Directors and finally as a staff member. Colleen originally was posted to Shearwater in 1975-1981, she was so impressed by the sense of community there that she returned in 1992 and has remained within the community

ever since. Colleen is a strong proponent of volunteerism within community. She sees volunteerism as a key strength in the Shearwater community. From youth to adults, she has seen many of the volunteers become leaders which has helped the community grow and develop. Colleen says that *“Shearwater is a vibrant community with a tremendous sense of pride in itself and the community at large, despite the frequent postings and change which is such a part of military family life, the community remains engaged, active and strong. Without the community pride and resources for families, CF members would not be as operational as they are, and would not be able to extend the compassion and commitment to the Shearwater community and to other local, national or global communities.”*

### **Francophone:**

The Shearwater community also includes a large francophone community within the community. Through community driven activities at the MFRC, there are 3 francophone programs: Parent & Tot, New Baby (with a francophone nurse from Capital Health) and a francophone social group, so they can connect and share their francophone culture. Each program has a growing number of participants each month. Francophones' night out is the most popular one with a list of over 60 participants. The francophone group has also been instrumental in building community partnerships with other groups and has advocated for French services within the greater community.

### **Shearwater Community Council:**

One way to ensure that Shearwater is an enduring community is through the volunteer Community Council. Comprised of a mayor and councilors, the Shearwater Community Council looks after safety, clean-up, communications and events within the community. Aside from their full-time jobs, Community Council members volunteer to research and distribute newsletters and keep the community connected and informed. Monthly meetings are open to the community and Community Council activities are geared towards all ages within the community.

*“The vision of the Shearwater Community Council (SCC) is to provide the best Community to residents through developing community support and involvement. The SCC is comprised of seven volunteer councilors, representing approximately 300 Married Quarter families. Communication with the families is accomplished through newsletters, a block parents program and a new neighborhood watch program. Community events and highlights include annual community clean-up, community Yard Sale and summer yard and community beautification contest. Fall and winter high lights and events include providing families with Halloween safety tips and a Christmas decorating contest. All of these things foster a sense of pride within the community. The SCC supports youth in our area by encouraging their participation in such activities as the spring clean-up to help foster growth and understanding in our young environmentalists. The Military Community is unique, in that new families are posted in yearly.”*

### **Chaplains**

Shearwater also has a strong and active faith based community, dating back to the base's beginnings. This community is unique and helps provide strength to the military community in Shearwater.

When the base in Shearwater opened, it was recognized immediately that the families who lived there needed a place to worship and connect with their spirituality. To accommodate this need, two chapels were built; Our Lady of Assumption (Roman Catholic) and St Michaels. Although people worshipped in two different buildings, it quickly became apparent that they often came together for events and ceremonies that involved the entire community. Both groups, for instance, have always gathered together for special dinners, fundraising events and community carol sings. The vacation bible school, which is run on the base every summer, brings together children of all denominations, many of whom are not a part of any religious group. The Bible studies and Choirs were so intermingled that no one was ever able to say whether they were Roman Catholic groups with Protestants present, or protestant groups with some RC added. With this knowledge that the chapels represented the community faith more than that of a single denomination, when the opportunity arose to have the two denominations worship in a single building in 1996, it was jumped at. The RC building closed and the RC community joined with the protestant community where they have co-existed peacefully ever sense, sharing the building not only for worship, but using it as a community gathering place to celebrate sacred rites of passage such as Baptisms, funerals and weddings.

The chapel sees an active community from infants to seniors who participate in regular services as well as Bible Study groups, special dinners, the community Carol Fest and more.

In recent years with heightened awareness to religious diversity, the chapel has opened its doors to faith groups outside of Christianity. While there has only been the odd time that this invitation has been accepted, the chapel and faith community embraces the opportunity to make sacred space for all faith groups.

All in all, the Shearwater chapel and the community that defines it has been and will continue to be an essential part of the entire community known as Shearwater. It has provided thousands of people with a place to go to reflect, find sanctuary and re-connect with their spirituality. Perhaps just as importantly, it has always provided newcomers and outsiders alike a place to go and connect with the community in a welcoming and safe environment.

### **Personal Support Programs: Community Recreation (<http://psphalifax.ns.ca>)**

The Community Recreation Department provides the community recreational activities and programs. Organizing Adult Fitness Programs (such as Aqua Fitness, Women's Weight Training Classes, and Yoga), operation of the bowling alley and McDonald Beach, and most importantly, oversees many of the recreational clubs that are open to the families who make up the Shearwater community. A large part of the services provided are dependent on the many dedicated volunteers who make Shearwater such a great community. The following submissions are examples of the hard work that our volunteers put forth:

### **Shearwater Shannon Minor Hockey( SSMHA)**

Activities for youth in the Shearwater community also include sports programs. Demonstrating the sense of community, volunteers are active participants in organizing and assisting with these programs. The Shearwater Shannon Minor Hockey Association is one example of a community led program which continues to run successfully within the community. Herman Harris is a 26 year veteran of the Canadian Forces, and along with full time work in the CF, is the SSMHA president and an active coach and tournament organizer.

*"Herman spends most of his free time at the rinks, at Hockey meeting and countless hours on the phone discussing, organising and countering some hockey crisis or others... I would say that in the run of a normal week this guys spends at the very least 4 to 5 hours a day working for the hockey kids in our community, that's 28 to 35 hours a week. So in essence from September to April this guy works two jobs. No wonder his wife Michelle calls herself a hockey widow.... :)"* - Jean-Francois Pelletier

Through the work of these volunteers the community benefits.

*"Herman has had a positive impact on thousands of kids in our community, often at his own expense since we run a non for profit organisation, I don't know anyone who has done more and invested more time for our kids than Herman has. When I think of some kids we have helped in the past I can't help but wonder where they would be now had Herman not stepped in."* - Jean-Francois Pelletier

Community pride is also seen in Shearwater through community success.

*"Herman and I took over as administrators of Shearwater Shannon Minor Hockey SSMHA, four or five years ago and in doing so we took an organisation which was loosing money every year to a success story that now provides house league kids with two tournaments a year, the Veteran Memorial Tournament held during the holiday season and the March break tournament held during March break. The Veteran's Memorial tournament formally named the Christmas tournament now includes 80 teams (more than 1200 kids from Novice age 6 y/o to Midget age 15-17 y/o kids) and the March break tournament sees around 1000 kids from the same age group as the Veteran memorial tournament. All proceeds go back to the kids of the community in the form of lower registration fees and equipment."*

### **The Shearwater Skating Club**

Community pride takes shape in several ways. As a common theme in the Shearwater community, volunteering is a great source of community pride. The Shearwater Skating Club has been in existence since 1967 and gets larger and stronger every year. The Shearwater Skating Club provides a variety of levels of skating lessons to all ages and interests.

*"As a part of the Shearwater Community, I can tell you that at the Shearwater Skating Club, we take pride in being members of Shearwater. We provide skating lessons of all levels, from beginner to competitive skaters, not only to our military members, but also to our Civilian members alike. As the only Skating Club (Skate Canada) in the Eastern Passage - Shearwater Area, we are proud members of our community. We highlight our skater's abilities each year at our Christmas Ice Show and throughout the year at various competitions. Also, many of our Canskate members go on to play in the minor hockey leagues, speed skating as well as figure skating. We have a wonderful arena staff and our support through the military is second to none. Many civilian skaters and*

*coaches, who come to our club, thoroughly enjoy skating there. I attribute that to the great volunteers and employees who make Shearwater sports as fantastic as they are."*

The Community Recreation Department is proud to work with the many volunteers who make up the two clubs mentioned above, and also The Shearwater Bluefins (a competitive swimming club for youth and masters), Jiu Jitsu, Shearwater Scuba (a diving club that offers both recreational and instructional diving), and the Wood Hobby Club. With all the hard work and dedication from the volunteers, The Community Recreation Department is able to offer a multitude of recreational programming for the members of the Shearwater Community.

### **Shearwater Aviation Museum**

The history of the community has also been preserved through the Shearwater Aviation museum. (<http://www.shearwateraviationmuseum.ns.ca>). In existence since 1978, the museum includes over 6000 artifacts of Shearwater history. Its purpose is "to acquire, conserve, organize, research and interpret to Canadian Forces personnel, families and to the public at large for their study, education and enjoyment, those artifacts and documents which best serve to exemplify the history and technology of Canadian Maritime Military Aviation." In 1995 the museum was able to acquire new space where more of its collection could be displayed. While some funding exists to support the operation of the museum, it too was started and has grown to what it is today thanks to community support and the thousands of hours of volunteer time.

### **Environment:**

The Canadian Forces has been committed to high standards of sustainable development nationally. Shearwater follows stringent recycling initiatives with signs present to outline what can and cannot be recycled and available disposal containers throughout the base. Walking trails within the community encourage members to enjoy some beautiful wooded trails and the great outdoors. The PMQ Beautification contest encourages residents to participate in projects that enhance the community. Annually, community clean up activities help keep the area clean and representative of a commitment to the environment.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Shearwater community meets and in many ways exceeds the criteria for the Community Spirit Award.

Ability to build on unique strengths within the community – The strengths within the community are diverse. With the transient nature of military postings, the Shearwater community is very unique, and despite postings and extended absences of many this community thrives and programs for all ages continue to run.

A high degree of citizen participation in community projects of a wide variety, range and interest – Activities such as the annual Community Carnival attract upwards of 700 people. Youth Centre and recreational programming run with high degrees of success and participation. Children's programs and daycares operate at capacity, all because the Shearwater community is committed to participating in community projects. The PMQ beautification contests and Christmas decorating contests are huge and successful. Faith based groups have consistently been successful within the community.

Clear evidence of community pride - Volunteers taking ownership of projects. The youth centre, Lighthouse Circle, child and family programming. Over 700 people attending the summer community carnival on a regular basis, an active fitness, crime prevention and community commitment shown by the volunteers and CF members within the community. Shearwater CF members and families also demonstrate a much more overwhelming sense of community pride through contributions to operations throughout the world and Canada, bringing humanitarian aid in times of disaster. From Hurricane Juan cleanup to SwissAir and international operations, the Shearwater community has made a mark on Canada and the world.

A focus on creating an enduring community – A community that is in a constant state of flux based on the military lifestyle, the traditional sense of enduring community could be seen as a challenge. But Shearwater meets those challenges and instead, creates one of the most welcoming and active communities around. This shines as a light and an example to the areas of the HRM that surround Shearwater and in some cases to the world outside. Families posted out of Shearwater tend to keep ties to the community, through friends, families and even online social communities. As military bases have moved away from having military housing within the base area, Shearwater remains a community strong in its roots as a community and committed to endurance and growth. The fact that the community has remained as strong and continued to grow for families as well as operationally is a testament to the unique and strong community that exists.