

The Award of Excellence

Lou Rocha



The Award of Excellence is given from time to time to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the membership of the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario. This award is considered CPCO's most prestigious award. In its 10-year history, this is only the second time that the Executive Council has elected to present this award at its annual Gala Dinner.

Lou Rocha has been a Catholic educator for 36 years. He served as a teacher, vice-principal and principal with the Toronto Catholic District School Board. He has dedicated his life to working together with his colleagues to improve opportunities for students in Catholic education. Lou was extensively involved in providing athletic and music programs for students during his years as a classroom teacher and administrator. In 1998 he received the Outstanding Educator Award from the Metropolitan Toronto Elementary Unit of OECTA. He served 16 years in the Toronto Catholic Schools Athletic Association including four terms as president. In 1994 he was the first recipient of the TCDSB Victor Angelosante Award for outstanding dedication to the overall development and education of young people.

Lou became involved with the Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario in 1997 when it became apparent that principals and vice-principals would be forming an independent association. He assisted the CPCO executive in preparing for the general meeting that led to incorporation. He was elected as elementary representative on the first Executive Council and served two years until he resigned in the spring of 2000 to apply for the position of Executive Director. He was seconded to the position of Executive Director at CPCO in July 2000.

Lou is honoured to receive the 2008 Award of Excellence from CPCO as it celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. He sincerely appreciates this recognition by the Executive Council and thanks them for their past and future support. He is very proud of the accomplishments that CPCO has achieved in ten short years. He has thoroughly enjoyed working with the members on committees and councils. Lou thanks all of the members who have served their colleagues in local associations and at the provincial level especially the Executive Council and the leaders of the other provincial organizations. Lou thanks the Toronto Catholic District School Board and the directors of education who have supported his work at CPCO: Johanne Stewart, Tom Donovan, Noel Martin and Kevin Kobus.

He would like to recognize and thank the entire CPCO staff for their excellent work and their dedication to serving the membership. Finally, Lou would like to thank his wife, Teresa, his children, Julie, Lisa and Michael, and all family members, friends and colleagues for their ongoing support and encouragement.

The following is an excerpt from his address to members and guests at the 2008 Gala Dinner.

I have always believed that education is the greatest gift that parents can give their children. I am so happy that my own children are here tonight with my wife, Teresa. Teresa, I and our

three children are graduates of the Catholic school system – a system for which we have such pride and passion.

My parents died 19 years ago. Last month my sister Rita, found a letter from my grandfather to my father dated February 1953. My grandfather wrote, "Louis (that was my father's name too), Canada has an excellent education system. It will provide a great future for your children." Two months later, my mother and father immigrated to Canada. My grandfather was right. Canadian education is excellent and it has provided a great future for my two sisters and me, for our own children and now, for our grandchildren.

We who work in the Catholic school system have another gift to celebrate. We have an excellent Catholic school system because of people who have come before and people who continue their work. People like you.

You have given me this Award of Excellence and I truly appreciate the recognition. However, this award must be shared with all of you. How could one person be excellent in anything without the support of others? Our achievements are the products of what we do together in our schools and school boards, our local associations and at the provincial level. We all deserve this award.

A few weeks ago CPCO celebrated the tenth anniversary of the day when many people in this room chose to continue as principals and vice-principals. It meant leaving our colleagues at OECTA. I am proud to say that CPCO has come a long, long way in ten years. Our organization is highly regarded for its advocacy and its integrity. We have the respect of our partners, our associates and the government.

I have been reflecting on the reasons for our success, for our excellence and I can summarize it in one word "community." As Catholic educators, community is the blood in our veins. It is the passion in our hearts. It is hard-wired in our brains.

*You have probably heard the saying, there is no "I" in team. Well, there is an "i" in the word community, which comes from the Latin word *communitas*, which means fellowship. Fellowship is at the heart of our work with the students, parents, teachers and with each other.*

Without fellowship we are isolated and we can become burdened and overwhelmed. With fellowship we can accomplish anything we choose. Even Jesus needed fellowship for His work to continue. As Catholic teachers we have always known the value of community, of fellowship.

I would like to conclude this thank you where I began. This award is about the excellence that we have achieved together and I dedicate it to all of you. Thank you.

