

## **2017 Award of Merit Recipient - Julie Barker**

Julie is someone whose passion and commitment to environmental sustainability, creativity and education expands beyond Midland's boundaries.

As one of the founding members of the Midland Community Garden in Little Lake Park, Julie Barker can be seen gardening most days throughout the gardening season. An educator at heart, she has been able to capture the critical importance of urban gardening as part of our urban landscape. She is an ambassador for the town – sharing with visitors gardening tidbits, a beautiful photograph or offering a sample to eat.

Since its establishment, she has helped the community garden expand by reinforcing volunteer partnerships, supervising and providing opportunities for community involvement to many groups and organizations including high school students, CNCC, Chigamik, Community Living, Wendat, the Boys and Girls Club and others.

Along with co-founding volunteer, Laura Jane Wilson, she has helped secure donations from multiple sources. She has linked the garden to initiatives such as Zuchinnimania and the Library Garden tour.

Her proudest moments are working with children and giving them the opportunity to learn where food comes from.

Her commitment to growing food stems from 20 years of farming with her husband, Dr. Elliott Barker. During this time, she has provided arts and craft instruction to many different initiatives in North Simcoe and their farm was a destination for an annual geography trip for MSS students.

In the 1980's, she helped to establish local moms and tots groups in the region, as well as create a community support network for parenting during the early years. Together with Maureen Bissett, she reinforced the growing movement of Family Resource Centres in our region.

In the 1990's she served on the Board of the "Family Playhouse", now known as Midland's "Early Years Centre". For 25 years, she worked with her husband who produced the quarterly journal "Empathic Parenting".

Upon retiring from her teaching career in the late 1990's, she trained in Reading Recovery and volunteered in one-on-one literacy sessions in local schools.

Julie is involved in green issues at every level of government, speaking up for the natural environment and sustainability.

It is indeed a great pleasure to present the Award of Merit to Julie Barker.