

When Terry Barber thinks of Michael Mack, he recalls the countless winter hours his late friend spent flooding and polishing the outdoor rink in Carleton Heights.

And when Barber watches the new operators prepare the rink in his place, he thinks of what Mack would have done differently — like creating ice paths to the street so kids in the south Ottawa community of nearly 8,000 never had to pass through sections of teenagers playing hockey.

Barber – who volunteered alongside Mack for four years – also remembers what he’d say to Mack, who would spend 10 to 12 hours a day preparing the rink in the winter.

“He’d get so exhausted, and I would tell him to go home,” Barber recalls. “That’s the kind of person he was. He wouldn’t quit.”

Ottawa city council has moved to rename the Carleton Heights Rink — located in River Ward southwest of Carleton University — to honour Mack after the lifelong resident of the area died in July 2024 following a brief illness.

River Coun. Riley Brockington brought the motion before Ottawa Council on Sept. 10. He said Mack’s passion for the outdoor rink makes the renaming “a fitting tribute.”

The Carleton Heights and Area Residents’ Association operates the rink with a grant from the City of Ottawa. Brockington said the agreement provides funds to the association to maintain the rink, a task he said Mack led with the help of other volunteers.

“On many nights, Michael was the lone volunteer flooding the rink and taking care of the ice,” Brockington said. “It was agreed that a fitting tribute to his legacy and contributions would be to name the outdoor skating rink after him.”

In addition to renaming the rink, a bronze plaque and possibly other signage at the site are expected to be a part of the tribute. The motion approved by council stated that Brockington will cover all costs associated with erecting new signage from his councillor’s budget.

Beyond the rink

Along with rink maintenance, Mack served on the CHARA board of governors and was the former president of the residents’ association.

Tim Patterson, who currently sits on the association’s board of governors, said he appreciates what his former fellow volunteer brought to CHARA.

“For those of us who came to serve on the board much later, he was a very important institutional memory of what came before,” said Patterson, adding that Mack served the organization for decades.

“A week before he passed away, he was at a board meeting — I couldn’t believe it,” said Patterson. “He was telling us he wasn’t feeling well, and how other things were going on. To have him right until the end was unbelievable.”

Patterson said Mack’s father was one of the founders of the Carleton Heights curling rink and that, like his father, Mack deeply cared for the south Ottawa community.

Opening Michael Mack Rink

Before the newly named rink opens for the season, the Carleton Heights community is planning to hold a ceremony as a gesture of remembrance and celebration for their former neighbour.

Brockington said he’s aiming for a day in December and is confident it will occur before the new year.

“This is who lived in this community his whole life,” Brockington says. “He gave back as best as he could.”