

# The Governor General's Caring Canadian Award



## Ryan Claude Walker

Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories

Ryan Walker has played Santa Claus in Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories since 2006. The local Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) detachment holds an Operation Santa every Christmas Eve, where it delivers gifts to between 300 and 500 people. This is no small task.



In 2006 Ryan Walker, then a young man of 14, offered to help out as Santa. That night it was -32 degrees Celsius. He donned a Santa suit and jumped into the back of one of the pickup trucks. For the next four hours, Ryan went to the door of each household and handed out gifts to ecstatic children and surprised adults. By the end of the night, everybody else was tired, but Ryan was still upbeat and eagerly handing out Christmas gifts.

"I attended each house with Ryan and witnessed his community spirit, especially when handing out gifts to children," says Constable John Snider. "He participated without any expectation of reward or praise or acknowledgement. His main focus is making the children happy and to do so without recognition. He is a valuable youth to his community and a good role model for his peers."

Snider notes that Tuktoyaktuk is a small and isolated community with its share of challenges, one where the lures of substance abuse are never far away. "Ryan abstained from these temptations, is well respected among his peers and is a positive role model for all around him," adds RCMP staffer Lorrie Meissner, who nominated Ryan for the award. "This is a small community and with Ryan's help, it shows the community that the police care. He is helping to break the mold that when you're a teenager it isn't cool to help the police."

Ryan's achievements have not stopped there. On graduating from

Mangilaluk School in 2009, he was class valedictorian and received the Governor General's Academic Medal, as well as the Mangilaluk School Award for graduate with the highest marks. He went on to attend St Francis Xavier University from 2009-2011, where he volunteered regularly as a Big Buddy. But he still goes back home every Christmas to help out with Operation Santa.

***"Ryan is a very community minded young man and can always be counted on wherever he is. [...] He is the definition of a caring Canadian."***

**Lorrie Meissner, nominator**

Meissner puts it simply. "Ryan is a very community minded young man and can always be counted on wherever he is. We are happy that he has been considered for this award as I suspect "volunteerism" is a part of his life. He is the definition of a caring Canadian."



The Caring Canadian Award was presented to Ryan Walker on April 17, 2012, at Rideau Hall. Sgt Ronald Duchesne 2012 © Rideau Hall