

## Recognizing spirit of N.S. Organization honours 3 women for their efforts

By LAURA FRASER - The Chronicle Herald

When Barry Braun was growing up in Alberta, he recalled that people would stop to chat with their neighbours.

But on his last trip to Calgary, Mr. Braun realized that Prairie spirit had all but dried up, prompting Mr. Braun, who has lived in Nova Scotia for 35 years, to take some action.

"There was a woman standing on the side of the road and she stood there for two hours . . . and in Nova Scotia that just wouldn't happen," he said.

Mr. Braun co-founded Spirit Nova Scotia, a grassroots organization that honoured three individuals at a ceremony in Halifax on Tuesday.

Alexis Ashworth was recognized for building homes — and community spirit.

"I'm motivated every day by the spirit of our homeowners," said the executive director of Habitat for Humanity HRM. "(But) it's not only the family that moves in. It's really the children, and the generations after, that sort of break the cycle of poverty."

A single mother with four daughters will eventually move into one of the four homes that the



Spirit of Nova Scotia award winners, Alexis Ashworth, Lori Barker and Dianne Swinemar smile towards the back of the room after being presented with their awards at a news conference on Tuesday. (Tim Krochak / Staff)

organization builds this year. This project is the first house built by women in the Halifax Regional Municipality. The housing site may intimidate women, so this teaches them a bit about construction and leadership, Ms. Ashworth said.

Award-recipients don't need to be as high-profile as Ms. Ashworth, though. People can celebrate the spirit of anyone who has really touched them, said Matt Whitman, who nominated Ms. Ashworth.

"You don't have to stage a press conference or a gala dinner to recognize this person's quality," he said in a speech.

Nominations can be completed at the Spirit Nova Scotia website). A certificate will subsequently be e-mailed to the person who submitted the nomination.

Hopefully, these awards will inspire people to keep Nova Scotia's spirit alive and prosperous, Mr. Braun said.

"If I had a dream, every single organization in (the province) would, in their own unique way, be honouring and celebrating that spirit that binds us together."

Dianne Swinemar, the executive director of Feed Nova Scotia, and Lori Barker, the vice-chairwoman of fund development for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax, also received awards.