

# ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR!

November 11, 2013

East Gwillimbury: Sometimes hard work pays off. It may take years, painstakingly digging and clawing a niche for yourself, but eventually, it's all worth while. These are the sentiments that Mr. Matthew R. Lawrence felt this past Friday night at the East Gwillimbury Chamber of Commerce annual Gala event where he won the prestigious Entrepreneur of the Year award amongst some tough and deserving competition.

Mr. Lawrence is the creator, owner, operator, creative director, producer and host of the Canadian Improv Showcase: Canada's best short-form improv company. They have been touring the world for over 16 years and have been featured in over 700 performances during that time. The group has employed over 100 different Canadian actors in that time and their hard work and determination have made them a growing force in Canadian comedy. Mr. Lawrence has made comedy a serious business offering a vast array of workshops and allowing professional acting talent the joy of regular working opportunities, not to mention the literally millions of laughs they have created while representing what makes Canadians funny.

Interestingly enough, Matthew was at the gala that night, being held at the beautiful Silver Lakes Golf Club in Holland Landing, not wearing his custom hockey jersey like he normally does when he graces the stage, but in full medieval armour. Matthew created another amazing company, The Knights in the Classroom, three years ago and the evening's theme was A Medieval Knight, so he and his talent (also members of the Canadian Improv Showcase) were there, in full costume/armour making merry, memorable moments for all to enjoy.

Carmen Gillespie was featured as the court jester and in many ways stole the show offering to show people her husbands balls which she kept in a satchel at her side (his juggling balls). Tracy Rowland was there offering medieval dance lessons. Andrea Lawrence (Matthew's proud wife and elementary school teacher) was there as photographer and Dwayne Mailman was there in full armour manning the pillory so people could get as authentic an experience as possible.

One of the greatest highlights for Matthew himself was not only being given the award, but having it delivered to him by his grade 10 history teacher, now MPP, Julia Munroe. Undoubtedly, she didn't recognize him (he wasn't prone to wearing full armour to class back then and it was a while ago), but she was visibly moved when he announced it to the very supportive crowd.

And how did they end the evening? With a medieval battle of course! Matthew and Dwayne donned their helmets, grabbed a sword and shield and demonstrated their vast skills for all those in attendance to enjoy. It was truly a magical "Knight!"

But that's not all for Matthew. He has another call to arms to answer, of sorts. On Monday November 18, 2013 he will attend the Ontario Colleges Premier's Awards at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto as he has been nominated by his former college, Georgian, in the Creative Arts & Design category. Perhaps Matthew will be bestowed another great honour. Either way, this time he won't be in armour...