

Late St. Clair Gardens BIA chair wins building award

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When Chris Panos found out his father, Don, was going to win a Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA) award, he was taken aback.

"It was truly amazing," he told The Bloor West Villager. "What a tremendous honour."

Don was the chair of the St. Clair Gardens BIA. On July 12, he died of a sudden heart attack at the age of 72.

"We were the best of friends — we could tell each other almost anything," Rose Capocci, the acting chair of the BIA, told The Villager. "He was the kindest and most giving person. I don't know anybody as giving as Don."

Don came to Canada from Macedonia when he was three years old. While here, he had four children and worked as a meat wholesaler in the early 1970s.

In 1979, he opened up Don's Wholesale Meats on St. Clair Avenue. A few years later, Don moved his shop to its current location near St. Clair Avenue and Old Weston Road where he adopted the name Don's Meats, selling wholesale and retail meats.

In 1985, the BIA was formed, and Don was a founding member. He served on the board as chair for majority of those years.

"This was a rundown area and at the time, there were a lot of drugs in the area and he was one of the main advocates of getting the drug people out," Chris said. "A lot of people in the area had a lot of respect for him. When he voiced his opinion, people listened, including the drug people."

Chris added Don became passionate about developing the area and making it a welcoming place.

"The area became a place where you could come down and do all your shopping — and then there was the parkette."

The St. Clair Gardens Parkette, located at St. Clair and Prescott Avenues, was once the site of hydro lines, Chris said. Don became instrumental in cleaning up the area and the park.

According to Capocci, his "fighter" attitude was what made him special.

"In our area, for some reason, we were always left out with the city or whatever was being done," she said. "Don would always fight for our area."

He was a fighter because he cared for what he did, added Chris.

"Growing up, he didn't have much himself, and since he became fixture in the area, he wanted to make sure people were well looked after in the community," he said.

On Dec. 6., Chris was "proud" when his father won the was the Michael Comstock Community Builder Award at TABIA's sixth annual awards dinner.

Michael Comstock was the chair of the St. Lawrence Market Neighbourhood BIA as well as TABIA. He died on Sept. 22, 2012.

Since Don's passing, the BIA and Ward 17 Davenport Coun. Cesar Palacio have introduced a request to change the name of the parkette after Don.

Chris said he hopes his father will be remembered as a, "very kind and caring man."



Don Panos died of a sudden heart attack on July 12. He was 72.



The late Don Panos, the owner of Don's Meats and former head of the local BIA on St. Clair Ave. W., was awarded the Michael Comstock Community Builder Award in December.



The family of the late Don Panos accepted his TABIA award on Dec. 6. From left to right: Michele Panos (daughter-in-law), Chris Panos (son), Micah Panos (grandson), Marcie Panos (daughter), Mercedi Panos (granddaughter), Callie Panos (granddaughter), Michelle Panos (daughter).