

And the award goes to....

by BRIAN LOCKHART

There is a really big sign at an intersection near where I live.

It advertises a new development that is still being built. Actually it has been several years since they first pushed a shovel into the ground and had the obligatory photo of well dressed women and men wearing suits ? all wearing white hard hats of course ? gathered in a semi-circle with silver coloured shovels.

I've been to a few of those to take the photo.

The sign says ?Thanks for voting us number one!?

It goes on to say that they, the development, the company, the designers, the owners, who knows, were voted number one in Ontario.

Well, don't thank me. I didn't even know there was a vote, and no one asked my opinion on whether I thought the cookie cutter homes on one side of the street were better than the identical cookie cutter homes on the other side of town.

In fact, if you stopped 100 people in town and asked if they took part in the vote for their favourite developer, I'll bet you couldn't find one person who will say they heard about the vote and rushed to cast their ballot for their favourite Ontario subdivision.

Either way, the developer was ?awarded? the distinction of being ?number one.'

Awards are usually given in recognition of an outstanding achievement of some sort. At least that's the way it used to be.

People were given awards based on something they did ? and it was something they did for someone else's benefit ? not for themselves.

The whole awards thing has become an industry in itself over the past few years.

I was sent an invitation to attend a winery tour. Sounds like fun, although I'm not even a wine drinker.

The invitation said it was a tour for six ?award winning wineries' in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Well, if they have won awards for their wine, they must be pretty good.

Except a quick check through the listings of wineries in the region ? and they are all award winners.

If you've got a wine, there's an award out there waiting to be pinned on your bottle.

Maybe your version of a mix of Cold Duck and last year's sparkling rose with a price tag of \$6.99 could receive the award for most likely to end up being consumed behind the bleachers at the high school prom.

I've noticed that industry awards have a big place in company life. There are awards for just about every job, function, and position you can imagine.

The thing is, you have to be a member of an association of some sort.

I've sat in a dusty office speaking to a business owner and the walls are covered in awards from the industry association or governing body.

If Joe, the owner at a local widget retailer, has the award for best widget sales, and his head guy has the award for best managed widget display in the eastern region of the northern district in the western part of the province, does that mean another widget dealer has the 'best' award at the opposite end of the map?

Companies give out awards to their own branches of the company around the province or country.

That in itself isn't a bad thing because if you want a good company culture, recognizing a good performance is a smart thing to do.

However, when the local branch of your company advertises itself as 'your local AWARD WINNING plutonium dealer,' it doesn't have much of a real impact when the award was given by the same company that owns the dealership.

I think the whole awards thing is part of the reason the Academy Awards in Hollywood are now receiving such low ratings. You have five actors, who all did a really good job, and you give one the award for an outstanding performance when clearly, you can't pick a single winner that stands out above the others.

The award becomes meaningless.

I have received a few journalism rewards for my work. I didn't ask for them, and didn't even submit an entry - it was done on my behalf by the office manager. I appreciated the award in terms of being mentioned for doing a good job, but the company I worked for at the time kept the actual fancy glass awards, and displayed them in their front room trophy case.

They claimed to be the 'award winning newspaper.'

The next time I'm in a mall looking for anything, the last thing I'll be checking, is if the shoelaces I need are in the award-winning class of modern shoe design.