This page was exported from - Shelburne Free Press
Export date: Fri Oct 30 12:09:12 2026 / +0000 GMT

Pine River Institute named a finalist in 2024 Defender Service Awards

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Pine River Institute has been announced as a finalist in the 2024 Defender Services Awards and the community has the chance to help them win the grand prize ? a 130 Defender vehicle and $25,000 USD.

?This is very exciting and represents a real boost to our organizations both via exposure and at the thought of possibly winning a vehicle that we otherwise could not afford as a charitable organization,? said Dan Ardis, Pine River's senior director of operations and campus life.

The Defender Service Awards are an annual initiative that looks to recognize charitable organizations. The awards include five categories that reflect the Defender brand's commitment to bringing a positive impact to the community through acts of service and humanitarian efforts around the world.

This year, the initiative will be awarding six customized Defender 130 vehicles to six charitable organizations in the U.S., Puerto Rico and Canada. The organizations that are selected support the communities they reside in with charitable work every day. The category sponsors will also be awarding $25,000 USD to the six winners.

In September, Pine River Institute was announced as a finalist in the Outdoor Accessibility and Education Awards category, which focuses on supporting people who can benefit from the outdoors.

The Pine River Institute looks to help adolescents struggling with addictive behaviours as well as mental health challenges regain control of their lives through their programming. The Pine River Institute has a four-phase program for youth and their families that starts with a six to eight-week-long Outdoor Leadership Experience in Algonquin.

According to Pine River Institute, there are more than 100 teens and families on their waitlist, which they typically stay on for anywhere from six months to one year.

Heather Kelly, communications director at Pine River Institute, said the organization currently has vehicles in their fleet, which are spread across their facilities. The organization has two vehicles up north at their Outdoor Leadership Experience, one in Orilla at their transition house and five on the main campus in Mulmur.

?Our students and staff are in the wilderness 365 days a year, through all seasons so we're hard on our vehicles ? they are also one of our most expensive costs so a new vehicle would really help us a lot,? said Ardis. ?It's important to note that there are not many vehicles on the market that have passenger capacity and capabilities that we need, with offroad, and trailering as well. We need a vehicle that can pull a heavy trailer of snowmobiles and gear, with 4WD, enough room for passengers, and stand up to a great deal of wear and tear.?

The community has until Oct. 17 to place their vote to help Pine River Institute win the 130 Defender vehicle as well as the $25,000 cash prize.

Those interested in voting to help Pine River Institute can do so by going to the Defender Service Awards website, where they are listed as a finalist for the Outdoor Accessibility and Education Award presented by OUTSIDE Interactive Inc.

You can also place your vote online: landrover.ca/en/experiences/sponsorship/defender-service-awards/vote/outdoor-accessibility

The winners of each category will be announced at Destination Defender on Nov. 23.