John J. Knott, simply known as J.J., has spent much of his professional life working tirelessly to promote, improve and support the field of healthcare engineering. Even after retiring in December 2014, he continues to devote much of his time to advancing this sector and Canada’s healthcare industry as a whole. His relentless dedication and continued enthusiasm to raise the bar for healthcare is what garnered Knott much praise from his peers at this year’s CHES National Conference, where he was presented with the 2015 Hans Burgers Award for Outstanding Contribution to Healthcare Engineering.

“I felt very humbled and at the same time elated that they thought I was worthy of joining the ranks of past award recipients,” says Knott. “My thanks go to all those people who have supported me, worked with me, mentored me and shared my passion.”

Throughout the years, Knott has worked with many exceptional individuals, though they are likely to attest that he’s the extraordinary one. From the day he stepped into his role as director of plant operations at Norfolk General Hospital (NGH) in 1991, Knott has been instrumental in implementing positive change. During his 23-year tenure, he oversaw a major makeover of NGH, which included a new emergency department, intensive care unit, X-ray area, cafeteria and front entrance, and made the hospital more energy-efficient. His accomplishments have been lauded both privately and publicly. In 2008, the hospital won the CHES Wayne McLellan Award of Excellence in Healthcare Facilities Management for its energy and environmental stewardship (of which he played a significant role in), and he was personally awarded the Individual Leadership Award at the Ontario Hospital Association’s 2014 HealthAchieve conference for his contribution to reducing NGH’s environmental impact and inspiring the hospital to “go green.”

The same year that Knott began his storied career at NGH, he embarked on what has become a fruitful journey with the Canadian Healthcare Engineering Society. Since joining the membership rank of what was then Region 5 of CHES Ontario, Knott has held most executive positions within the chapter, including president when he led it through a period of growth. During this time, he concurrently sat on the National executive and was elected CHES National president in 2011. In his term, he fostered a strategic partnership with the Canadian College of Health Leaders (CCHL) and strong relationships with affiliated engineering partners, including the American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE) and the International Federation of Hospital Engineering (IFHE). In addition to holding leadership positions, Knott has volunteered his time to sit on various National committees, and has been a staunch supporter and advocate of the organization, particularly on other healthcare-related groups’ boards, such as the Canadian Coalition for Green Health Care (CCGHC). He is currently vice-chair of the CCGHC, where he is the lead on Healthcare Energy Leaders Ontario (HELO), a program created in partnership with CHES Ontario in 2014. “Originally funded through the Ontario Power Authority (OPA), HELO provided a free service to help healthcare facilities across the province assess and identify opportunities for energy conservation projects, initiate them and then see them through to completion,” explains Knott.

In the 12 months that Knott led the initiative, the HELO program saved the Ontario healthcare sector $2.4 million in utility costs and obtained $3.8 million in incentive savings (for a total of $6.2 million in savings).

Although no longer supported by the OPA, HELO continues to offer the same services for a nominal fee.

In addition to these professional commitments, Knott continues to teach the nine-module building operators certification course for the IESO (Independent Electricity System Operator), as well as hospital building systems courses at Seneca College, where he has mentored more than 300 students over the past four years. He’s also a member of the Who Did It Club in his hometown of Simcoe, Ont. Servicing Norfolk County, it provides short-term supply of medical equipment, such as wheelchairs, hospital beds, walkers and canes, free of charge to persons recovering from cancer-related procedures, surgeries or illnesses.

“I’ve been very fortunate and have had a great career, so I believe in giving back and doing what I can to support the folks that are working in facilities management, specifically, and healthcare, in general,” he says. “It’s a good feeling. It’s a good thing.”