

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Paul Spragg

BY PAULA BOON

Paul Spragg loves motorcycles so much, they were an integral part of his wedding.

"I'm not a biker by any means but a two-wheel enthusiast," says the residential sales representative at ABC Overhead Garage Doors. "I like tootin' around town."

On the day of their nuptials in the summer of 2007, 12 bikes escorted Spragg and his bride Donna to and from Madill Church. "It was so much fun," Spragg says. "We went around town twice."

Spragg, who many may know from his 13 years working at Hampton Lane Menswear in the Huntsville Place Mall, learned to ride a friend's motorcycle in an underground parking lot in Toronto during his late teens. He finally bought his own three years ago.

"It's the closest thing to flying," he says. "You sort of lose yourself with the wind against you. It's better than a convertible. If you've never ridden on a motorcycle, you're missing out."

Even before he joined their ranks, Spragg gravitated toward motorcycle owners in parking lots. "They were so welcoming and ready to talk. It's a totally different culture," he says. "Their arms are always open to any other two-wheel enthusiast."

When Spragg hits the road on his bike, he wears a distinctive riding vest as a tribute to Canadian soldiers. On the shoulder it says, "Support Our Troops," and it also has a

Canadian flag along with the flags of the 40 countries working with Canada in Afghanistan. "I wouldn't be able to do what they do," he says by way of explanation.

Spragg, who came to Huntsville in 1989, has been a member of the Huntsville branch of the Royal Canadian Legion for the last 10 years. "I joined because of darts," he says.

A dart player since age 17, Spragg met someone at a tournament who invited him to join the Legion team. That lasted until a few years ago when his arm grew weary. "Now I mainly play snooker on Tuesdays with the guys and sometimes play darts before while we're waiting for a table," he says.

Home life also very important to Spragg, who says he enjoys putting around the house and spending time with Donna. "I love going home," he says. "I'm a family man."

That family includes three daughters and five grandchildren who live in the GTA, and he sees them as often as possible. "I went to see my grandson Kyle's first hockey game in February," he says. "Actually, he's pretty good."

Workwise, Spragg has always been in sales. "I like people. I kissed the Blarney stone twice, so I've got the gift of gab," he says with a grin.

When he first came to town, Spragg tended bar for



a while before landing the job at the store in the mall. Then, after 13 years there, he moved on to Mobile Marine and more recently to ABC Overhead Garage Doors. "I like the respectful philosophy here and I think I have a lot to offer," he says, adding that he's looking forward to attending the trade show in the mall on May 14, which the business will be attending for the first time at his suggestion.

Wherever he is, Spragg approaches life with humour. "I try to make someone smile once a day. It makes me feel good and I hope it makes them feel good too," he says. "Life is way too short for anger and mis-

understanding."

Often that humour takes the form of silly get-ups. For example, when he worked at the mall, he often dressed up during the Christmas season. "I dyed my mustache red, my goatee green, and had tree ornaments hanging off my mustache and ears," he said. "Anything to make people laugh."

He still returns in full Christmas regalia to spread cheer from store to store each year.

"I just like people to enjoy life," he says. "Every day people wake up and get peeved about something. I like laughing, myself. Why not have someone else laugh with you?"

LETTERS

Help the home-care workers

My 102-year-old father has used the services of a home-care worker for over five years. The home-care worker he has is excellent. She is conscientious, trustworthy, reliable and a very caring person. If he did not have her help, where would my father be?

The province's 3,000 Red Cross Homecare workers went on a rotating strike last week. Red Cross is one of the largest agencies under contract with the government to provide homecare services.

These home-care workers have been pushed to the limit! Services will stop for one day in a particular city before moving to the next. Clients deemed "essential" will not be affected and their services will not be reduced.

These admirable essential workers are a great asset to our health care system. Home care is the delivery of health care and support services in the home. This service enables seniors, people with disabilities, people recovering from surgery and children with special needs to access care in a more comfortable environment.

Travel time remains the main outstanding issue. Workers would ultimately like to receive their hourly wage while travelling from one client's home to the next.

Other public service workers such as Firefighters don't get paid just when they put out fires and paramedics don't just get paid when they save lives. Home-care workers are working 10 to 12 hours per day and getting paid for six. These caregivers also use their own time without pay to call and remind the clients when they are coming.

Here is an example of a working day for a home-care worker. She works 10-hour day but is only paid for six hours because she travels four hours going from client to client (often over rough country roads)...and travel time is not paid! This person makes approximately \$84 per day. That works out to \$8.40 per hour, less than minimum wage. This is not acceptable.

Home-care workers are critical to our health-care system by freeing up beds in our hospitals and treating people where they want to be — at home. These caring workers are making a great saving to the taxpayers. Why? Because these individuals who need home care would be in hospitals or nursing homes. The cost would be horrendous. Yet, the home-care worker is not appreciated enough.

With soaring fuel prices, distance between clients, and low pay, it is extremely difficult for these caring workers to keep their job. It is a system that leaves these professionals who provide key home health services living below the poverty line.

A staffing shortage caused by all these issues means we will face increased wait time to receive home care. That's bad news. Home-care agencies and the Ministry of Health that fund them need to adequately support home health care now.

It's time the government stepped in and rewarded these essential workers with a fair deal. You may need home care in the future, so speak up for these caring, hard-working individuals.

Doris Villemaire
Emsdale

Thanks to the volunteers who strengthen our community

More Ontarians are turning to their communities for support as we face an economic downturn of global proportions.

For many, it means counting on a food bank to feed their families or seeking skills training to remain employable. For others it means starting a business or simply participating in sports, cultural or social activities to lift their spirits or overcome feelings of isolation.

As their services are sought after more than ever before, Ontario not-for-profit and charitable community groups must themselves rely more heavily on citizen participation. Volunteers, especially trained ones, are the fuel of these organizations, contributing to make them effective and sustainable. Without volunteers it is virtually impossible to provide community programs and services.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) has long been a leader in funding volunteer activities for not-for-profit organizations. We understand how vital it is for community groups to attract and train year-round volunteers and to keep them engaged in the worthwhile causes they serve. For example, thanks to recent OTF grants, North Bay's White Water Gallery, Local Services Board of Britt-Byng Inlet, Muskoka Community Foundation and the Temiskaming International Plowing Match 2009 were able to strengthen their volunteer base.

During National Volunteer Week, April 19

to 25, Ontario is celebrating the generosity of its volunteers. As chair of OTF's grant review team for Muskoka, Nipissing, Parry Sound and Timiskaming districts, I know first-hand the value of volunteerism. I wish to thank the dedicated volunteer members of OTF's board of directors and local review team with whom I have the honour of serving. I applaud their outstanding commitment to improving life in our community.

I also want to praise the dedication of all volunteers and acknowledge the tremendous difference they make. Last year alone, more than 2,100 volunteers in our four districts worked wonders and generously contributed more than 27,700 hours of their time to organizations supported by OTF. Across Ontario, as many as 192,200 people gave more than 3.5 million hours of their time. If we were to translate their tireless efforts into value, it would come to more than \$470,000 locally and nearly \$60 million provincially.

It's very likely that you or someone close to you is a recipient of the efforts of volunteers. During National Volunteer Week, I urge you to take a moment to thank volunteers for working at making our communities and our province a better place to live. In these critical times, I also encourage everyone to join the ranks of volunteers and help strengthen our community.

Lois Cookman
chair, Grant Review Team for Muskoka,
Nipissing, Parry Sound and Timiskaming
Ontario Trillium Foundation

Fundraising inequality hurts democracy in Parry Sound-Muskoka

The local riding associations for Parry Sound-Muskoka rely solely on contributions from individuals now that corporations can no longer contribute money to a local riding association. One would think that raising money for elections would now be fairer and more democratic. Although winning a riding is not always dependent on who has the greatest amount of money, in reality there is now a huge gap in fund raising among candidates.

In Parry Sound-Muskoka, Tony Clement (Conservative) raised \$91,844.28 from individuals for his 2008 election campaign. Of that amount \$77,275 was raised by individuals who donated over \$200 (see Elections Canada website). Of this group, 35 donors

were full time residents of Parry Sound-Muskoka donating \$19,250 while \$58,025 was donated by individuals who have their addresses listed as being outside of Parry-Sound Muskoka.

As a comparison here is the breakdown of donors who contributed more than \$200 to the other three major party candidates. Glen Hodgson of the Green Party of Canada raised only \$4,075. Six local permanent residents and one who lived outside of the riding contributed \$2,510. Jo-Anne Boulding raised \$5,242. Of the five people who donated \$2,600, four people were permanent residents and one person lived outside the area. Jamie McGarvey received contributions of a total of \$10,430, \$6,750 were from donations by

12 donors living in the riding and from four people who lived outside the riding.

If one candidate can raise over \$90,000 with more than 50 per cent of it coming from outside the riding and raise four times as much money as the other three candidates combined, how does this reflect real democracy? Not only do the other candidates have little chance of influencing the voters in any significant way, one should be very concerned when a winning candidate is relying on funding from outside the riding. Who does Tony Clement represent? Is it the people of Muskoka when over \$50,000 is given to him by residents who live outside the area? Maybe the donors are cottagers of Muskoka. Most of these outside contribu-

tors' addresses listed are from the GTA.

Voters need to be reminded that political campaigns are now run only from the money raised by individual voters. People of Parry Sound-Muskoka should be aware that if they support a political party, they need to show their support by contributing money to the riding association of their choice and to volunteer during election time. If they don't, Tony Clement, the Conservative Party candidate in Parry Sound-Muskoka will continue to win elections mainly on money raised from outside the riding, which is not good for Muskoka nor is it good for democracy.

David Moore
Bracebridge

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