

This week's Muskoka Mosaic: Introducing Bonnie Harris

By Paula Boon

Going to Nicaragua on a mission trip changed Bonnie Harris's life.

The co-owner of M and M Hair Place says her time in South America gave her a new appreciation for everything she had. "There's so much love there," she says. "It's incredible: you go there to help, but it's the other way around. You look at things differently. Material things don't mean anything. It's important to let people know you love them - to say it and mean it."

After her first mission trip in 2007, Harris found coming back to Canada a shock. "I went into the grocery store, walked around with my cart and went home with nothing," she says, tears welling up in her eyes. "It was just weird. You can't believe it. They have nothing and we have so much."

Harris says her family stopped throwing out food and no longer uses the phrase, "I'm starving." They even did a one-week fast, eating only fruit and vegetables to try to understand what it felt like to be hungry.

While in Nicaragua in 2007, Harris and those with whom she was travelling spent time in several re-nutrition centres, holding and feeding malnourished babies, which was an emotional experience. That year, Harris also handed out food to older kids, but she found this job difficult because she couldn't feed everyone. "If they didn't have a tag they didn't get food. That just about killed me," she says.

Last year Harris returned to a different region of Nicaragua with Missionary Ventures Canada. Although she won't be on this year's trip, she has collected bags full of clothes to send to a woman she met in 2008 who is raising seven children on her own.

"I plan to go back again, but my kids are



WELCOME: Bonnie Harris, co-owner of M and M Hair Place on Chaffey Street, pauses for a moment in her salon. The Huntsville native has been on several mission trips to Nicaragua and says they were life-changing experiences.

in Grade 12 this year and wanted to have a family trip before they go away to college," she explains.

Harris grew up on Chaffey Street as the fourth of six children in the Botting household, right across from where her salon is now. She always leaned toward caregiving, whether it was babysitting or working for a year after high school looking after two elderly women.

That same approach extends to her work as a hair stylist. "They're like family," she says of her customers.

Harris met her husband Jeff at school in Oshawa and the two bought M and M Hair Place from former owner Doris McFayden in 1987, the same year they were married. The couple has three children: Jordan, 19, and twins Ryan and Emily, 17.

For 19 years, Harris never took a holiday.

"Both being in the same business, it was difficult. We didn't want to leave our customers," she says. "We had every other weekend off together, and that seemed like enough."

Then a friend invited Harris to go to Nicaragua, and she didn't have to think twice before saying yes. The mission experience coincided with a deepening of the Harris family's spiritual life. They had all taken the Alpha course at St. Andrew's Presbyterian church in 2005, and in the summer of 2008, they were baptized in the Big East River. "That was amazing. That's where I swam as a kid. My Dad used to take us. That meant a lot to me," she says.

Whatever she is doing, Harris loves to document it through photography, something she started when she was a student at Huntsville Public School and refined during high school, when then-teacher Jon Snelson taught her to use a darkroom to develop photos.

For 15 years, Harris has been a member of the Huntsville Photo Club, which meets once a month to take photos together and critique each other's work.

She has photographed a number of weddings and also had her photos in shows at the Algonquin Theatre and at her friend Holly Kelly's barn in Sundridge. Half of the proceeds from the latter show went to Nicaragua.

Recently, Harris has begun painting as well. "It's a great, relaxing hobby. I love it," she says, adding that it encourages her to get out and appreciate the area, which she adores. "I'll be here forever. It's just beautiful. Everywhere you go is just beauty."

Thanks to Krystyna Medon for suggesting that Bonnie Harris be profiled. To explore the complete collection of Muskoka Mosaic profiles, go to www.thelifecollector.com.

Bike route project has multimillion-dollar price tag

Muskoka's annual active transportation budget is just \$200,000

By Karen Longwell

A regional cycling route system is in the works for Muskoka.

The bike route system is the brainchild of the District of Muskoka's active transportation committee, which has a \$200,000 annual budget. The proposed routes, some of which would be constructed as paved lanes onto the sides of district roads, vary in cost depending on the amount of work needed. If all routes were completed, the cost would be in excess of \$5.8 million, according to a district report.

Potential loops, connection routes and community routes run through all municipalities in the district. The routes were determined through consultation with representatives from the area municipalities, a Take Heart representative and a member of a Muskoka bike group, said Melissa Halford, district planner.

Loop A, for example, would start at Muskoka Road 117 at Hwy. 11, go to Bonnie Lake Road to Port Sydney, Windermere Corners and finally High Falls Road.

Each route was evaluated by its cost, connectivity with other cycling routes, scenic quality, destinations, amenities and traffic volume.

Some routes only require "Share the Road" signage, whereas others need improvements to the road shoulder width or a bike lane, said Halford.

If the road's posted speed is over 70 kilometres per hour and there are over 2,000 vehicle trips per day on the road, district staff recommends the construction of 1.25 metres of paved shoulder for the bicycle lane, said Halford.

A standard bike lane is 1.5 metres, said Tony White, commissioner of engineering and public works for the district.

The width and the use of the active transportation lanes were discussed.

Active transportation chair and Bracebridge district councillor Graydon Smith suggested if there is an opportunity to build a 1.5-metre bike lane during a road reconstruction, it should be done.

Huntsville district councillor George Young agreed, but suggested that it shouldn't stop bike routes from being established with smaller 1.25-metre lanes.

There were also concerns raised on what to call the extra lane.

White suggested not painting a bike symbol on the 1.5 lanes on the advice of the district solicitor. Labelling the lanes could make the district label, if there was an accident, he said.

Lake of Bays district councillor Margaret Casey suggested a symbol other than a bike to paint on the road, such as an active transportation logo.

The committee left the decision on how to label the lanes for another day.

The routes are designed to encourage active transportation for the average person. The route lengths are small and manageable, said Halford.

Stakeholders and municipalities will have an opportunity to look at the suggested bike routes and provide input.

As some of the bike routes are estimated to cost more than a \$500,000 to complete, the committee discussed the district's

annual active transportation budget of \$200,000.

Thus far, the active transportation committee has tackled the pricey active transportation component on High Falls Road, which included 1.5-metre bike lanes and came at a \$450,000 price tag. The cost was covered under Muskoka's active transportation budget of \$200,000 for 2007, 2008 and part of 2009.

White said he thinks \$200,000 was a good place to start, but wants to move toward making active transportation part of Muskoka's standard roads program.

"(So that) whenever the public works department engages in upgrades on those routes, we would incorporate the designated AT (active transportation) infrastructure, whether it be a 1.25-metre shoulder, one-metre shoulder or simply Share the Road signs," said White.

He suggested automatically including the AT component on the planned bike routes, if that road is slated for reconstruction.

The committee discussed a possible 2010 project, but failed to make a decision.

Smith suggested a project for 2010 could be Loop D, which would run along Canal Road, Muskoka Road 9 and Muskoka Road 2 in Huntsville.

The staff report listed Loop D as a priority based on a number of factors. The route runs through Lake of Bays and Huntsville and segments are often used as a tri-

athlon route. The total cost to pave shoulders along this route is estimated at \$584,500, according to the district report.

While Young agreed with the suggestion, Casey wanted more time. She suggested a route in Port Carling or Georgian Bay.

"I think there is value in doing something outside of the Huntsville area. ... I think Huntsville is

benefiting greatly from the G8 and I think we need to be looking outside of the Huntsville network," said Casey.

Smith suggested committee members look at the routes and make a decision on a project at the next meeting.

The Active Transportation Committee is scheduled to meet again on Oct. 29.

The Huntsville Salvation Army
CHRISTMAS HAMPER
APPLICATION 2009

Starting: November 2, 2009
Ending: November 27, 2009
Open: Monday, Wednesday and Friday
Time: 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon
1:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.

If you live in Baysville, Utterson, Port Sydney, Dorset, Dwight or Huntsville, or if you pay your property taxes to the Township of Lake of Bays or Huntsville you will be assigned to the Huntsville Salvation Army for Christmas help.

The Address:
10 Mary Street East, Huntsville, Ontario

You will need to bring the following:
Rent receipt, ID for all members of the household, all expenses (phone, hydro, water, car and house insurance, etc.)

Household Income:
All your household income (Ontario Works, wages, baby bonus, disability, etc.)
Please call for an appointment.

If you have any questions please call 788-0624
The Huntsville Salvation Army
Family and Community Services

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A fundraising meal where you get to keep the "one of a kind" exquisite bowl! The proceeds from this Early Literacy fundraiser will go towards purchasing books which will be given FREE to children (0 to 6 years).
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October 31

PAINTED KIDS

FREE Face Painting
10 - 4 PM
Be safe & paint your mask on!

We won't be participating in any Ghoul or Goblin Trick or Treating on Halloween night, but ...
REMEMBER, BE SAFE & BE SEEN!

All children under the age of 12 will receive a FREE BAG OF CANDY!

MAD SCIENCE
2 PM
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Highway 60

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BENTLEY
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THE CLOTHES CLOSET
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KINGS BUFFET
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