

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Sharon Wilson

BY PAULA BOON

You could say Sharon Wilson is a driving force in Huntsville. The Novar woman spends hours every day behind the wheel, getting Huntsville residents young and old to where they need to go.

As the driver of the Huntsville Transit specialty bus, Wilson has become a friend to many passengers with special needs. The majority of her customers are seniors and those in wheelchairs.

While the other town bus runs on a set schedule, Wilson picks up people who call her on the bus at 788-8118 and takes them anywhere in Huntsville.

The single mother of two grown daughters, Tracy in Victoria, British Columbia and Kelly in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Wilson is also a school bus driver for Campbell's Bus Lines. Five days a week she drives students to Huntsville High School, Riverside and St. Mary's from the North Waseosa area.

Wilson enjoys both jobs. On the town route, she has gotten to know many people.

"It's sort of like a big family. You see them pretty much every day," she says. "And the students on the school bus are great. It's good to see them grow — and a tremendous responsibility to ensure they arrive safely."

The only drawback to driving a school bus, in Wilson's mind,

is dealing with less-than-conscientious drivers on the road.

"They're so dangerous. They cut us off and pass us when our lights are flashing," she says, adding that she has to check thoroughly to make sure it's safe for kids to cross the road.

"People need to be more careful. We've got precious cargo on board," she says.

People are not the only recipients of Wilson's care. A lover of animals, she has been on the board of the Huntsville Animal Shelter for the past ten years.

"There's always a need for help at the shelter," she says. "We need funds, volunteers to walk dogs, all kinds of things. Spaying and neutering is still an issue as well."

Wilson is full of praise for the staff at the shelter. "They work very hard. They'll stay after hours if someone is coming to adopt or if there's an animal that needs extra attention," she says.

When Wilson finally makes it home at the end of a long day, she has her own dogs and cats to look after. "I've rescued more animals than I can count," she says. "That's my passion: I'm here for the animals."

On the other hand, she reflects, the animals are there for her too. "You can be upset and your animal will comfort you," she explains. "It's well known that animals have a good effect on your health."



SHARON WILSON

Riding horses also relaxes Wilson, who grew up on a farm around Stoney Creek and then Walkerton and had her own horses for many years.

"Whenever I can, I go riding," she says.

Wilson would like to have her own horse again. She has the space but, as she puts it, "not enough days in the week."

The eldest of nine, Wilson has remained close to her family. Their huge annual reunions are a high point for her.

"We used to hold Christmas in a community centre because there were so many of us," she laughs. "Now we hold it in summer, on a farm so everyone can sleep in tents. We have fresh corn on the cob and all kinds of games for the kids. It's great."

But even her ties to her loved ones can't pull her away from Huntsville.

Three years ago her family members were encouraging Wilson to move closer to them in Walkerton. She spent a summer house-hunting in that area, but then she returned here and looked around.

"I love Huntsville. No matter where you are, within five minutes in any direction you can be on the water," she says. "I looked around and I thought, 'I can't leave here.'"

Is there someone you'd like to see profiled in this space? Please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metroland-northmedia.com.

LETTERS

Plow drivers doing their best

Re: Where are the plows, letter to the editor, Huntsville Forester, Dec. 5.

As a plow driver for the town of Huntsville for the past 30 years, I can tell you that yes, there is a lack of drivers and equipment.

We have only one shift of drivers, who are allowed to drive a maximum of 13 hours in every 24-hour period, with a minimum of eight to 10 hours off between driving shifts. We are also required to be on a seven-day, 70-hour cycle and required to take 36 consecutive hours off between cycles. This is according to Ministry of Transportation guidelines.

Our sidewalk plows work every day, possibly

up to 16 hours per day.

All staff are on call 24 hours, seven days per week for the winter season, from Nov. 1 to April 15, with only one seasonal contract driver to replace anyone who is sick or requires a personal day off.

But we all need some rest after dealing with the winter weather, impatient drivers and taxpayers. Please have some patience. We are doing the best we can with limited manpower and equipment.

Doug Oke
chief steward
IBEW Local 636

Closing Dorset library reckless

It is lamentable that Dorset is about to be deprived of a basic public service, namely its small library, without consultation. In this democratic society of ours, the people who pay for the services, salaries, wages and expenses of their elected representatives and staff have a right to be asked for their opinion.

In announcing the decision to close the Dorset Library, the deputy reeve of Algonquin Highlands, Tom Gardiner, said it was an enhancement. It stands to reason and common sense that he should learn the meaning of the words he uses. "To enhance" in the New Webster Dictionary reads: "to make greater (as in value or desirability), heighten, intensify, magnify." Closing the library in Dorset cannot be said, by any stretch of the imagination, to be an enhancement.

Dorset has been beset by closures, all without proper and due public input. Close first and ask questions afterwards seems to be the motto of all levels of government these days. Dorset lost its public school, the Frost Centre (a provincial educational institute and a great asset to Dorset) and now possibly its library. Perhaps Gardiner has a

mind to "enhance" Dorset still further by suggesting the closing of the Dorset recreation centre, and then perhaps a few roads? Why not?

The proposed closure of this essential and vital community service is a reckless and ill-conceived act of dumbing down the community of Dorset. In our democratic society, our taxes should be used for the benefit of the majority, not just for the elite and wealthy. Taxpayers who vote councillors into positions of responsibility are led to believe, by doing so, that their essential interests and needs will be taken care of. An extra runway for Stanhope Airport in Algonquin Highlands only benefits the elite and wealthy. It is not an essential need for the majority of taxpayers in Haliburton County.

The decision to close the Dorset library will remove an essential and vital cornerstone in the structure of the community of Dorset. Small communities in sparsely populated areas may not generate many votes for politicians, but they are a vital part of a vibrant and healthy democratic society.

Hugh Reynolds
Dorset

New mailbox positive experience

I have to wonder how much extra time people have on their hands to spend so much of it griping about changes to their mailbox.

When the Canada Post employees came around to my door recently to announce the elimination of our mailbox, I was excited! In the five years that we have had our own mailbox at the end of our driveway, it has been repeatedly bashed, stolen, and hit, not only by the snowplow, but the school bus as well.

It is nearly impossible to dig it out after the plow has gone by. As for them being broken into, we lived in town for 10 years and that never hap-

pened to us nor anyone else I know.

We now have the new mailboxes, and I have to say I'm enjoying them. There is no shovelling required and I get the added bonus of seeing my neighbours from time to time. I realize that people don't like change and some things take some getting used to, but I encourage you to look at the positives of this change.

Now, take that extra time you've got and use it to raise awareness about something important.

Lisa Dart
Hillside

Offering reward for return of 'dependable workhorse'

On Wednesday evening, Dec. 5, I went dashing through the snow on my blue mountain bike to the Almaguin Theatre. I was going to lock it to a signpost behind the building, but the lock was caked with frozen slush and was not useable. So I stuck the lock between the spokes of the rear wheel to make the bike appear locked from a distance, thinking nobody would steal a cheap bicycle in the winter anyway. But, an hour and a half later it was gone. A quick check in and around the building turned up nothing. This was not the bicycle or rider who was struck twice in a short time by moving vehicles a week earlier.

The bike was not a lightweight thoroughbred, but a tough, dependable workhorse. I could strap a 100-pound rock to my back and cycle out of the forest and into town to my workshop with no problem. My wife was concerned about the wear and tear on our eight-year-old car.

Maybe someone took it for a joyride and then abandoned it nearby. Maybe someone else will find it before the police do and call me at 789-3331 and collect a modest reward in time for Christmas. Thank you.

Rudi Stade
Huntsville

Hwy. 60 tough for pedestrians

My family has enjoyed living in Huntsville for close to four years. Last year, in an attempt to simplify our lives and minimize our own environmental footprint, we sold one of our two cars and moved into town.

Although there are days that are hectic, and my wife and I sometimes battle for the use of our one car, we have enjoyed walking to work at the high school and hospital. We are also proud of the example we are setting for our children.

Unfortunately, our desire to leave our car behind has been put to the test this winter. Despite the fact that there is a sidewalk along Hwy. 60, connecting our subdivision to the main routes into town, the town does not plow this sidewalk.

I called the town to inquire about this and was told that it is not a sidewalk, but instead a foot-

path. This footpath is the responsibility of the MTO, who refuse to plow it because of liability issues. Obviously, there is less liability for the MTO when pedestrians walk on Hwy. 60, risking their own lives while breaking the law. The increasing number of teenagers who walk along the highway at dusk because there is no plowed footpath seems unnecessarily dangerous.

I notice across Hwy. 60 a well-maintained snowmobile track. The message is clear: you must drive some sort of motorized vehicle to live in Huntsville. How did the town of Huntsville allow a subdivision to be built without adequate sidewalks that allow our children to safely walk to town?

Pierre Mikhail
Huntsville

It's time to park the toys

About 35 years ago I predicted that some day in the near future, smoking around children would be called child abuse, and such behavior would (eventually) be an indictable offence. And then, by extension, I surmised that smoking around pets (dogs, cats, turtles, birds, all domestic charges) would also be termed animal abuse.

I was wrong. I figured we humans would have enacted laws by the turn of the century effectively outlawing recreational asphyxiation around children, not to mention pets.

Furthermore, in light of the science regarding tobacco smoke, secondhand smoke and now the conclusive reality of global asphyxiation (euphemistically referred to as global warming/climate change) one would think we'd

suck it up and outlaw recreational asphyxiation as a blanket statement to show leadership (why wait for dithering seven-faced politicians like Harper and his predecessors) in this challenge to end all challenges. Apocalypse now.

It's time to park our toys that pollute. It's time to burn calories and not carbon-based fuels (gasoline). It's time to walk, hike, ski, toboggan, show-shoe, bicycle, sail, canoe, row, climb, swim, jog, run or dance. It's time. Damn the toys.

To wait for slugs in government to catch up to reality is a terminal mistake. Each of us can be leaders, initiators and examples of reason and consideration for all creatures. All life.

Mendelson Joe
Emsdale



HEALTHCARE HEROES

Huntsville District
Memorial Hospital Foundation
100 Frank Miller Drive
Huntsville, ON P1H 1H7
Tel: (705) 789-4756

Winners of the Huntsville Hospital Foundation's

Cash or Car Contest

\$5,000 early bird winner - Dianne Allair

\$1,000 winners - Bobbie Bird, Arlene Crozier, Paula Boon, Walter Thur, & Dale Godfrey

Congratulations to Morley Hammond of Huntsville.

His ticket #1587 won the \$40,000 grand prize.

Watch for next week's Forester to see if he took the CASH or the HONDA CRV.

Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation continues to support:

- Huntsville District Memorial Hospital
- Fairvern Nursing Home
- Burk's Falls & District Health Centre
- Muskoka-East Parry Sound CCAC



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