

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Doris Gonder

BY PAULA BOON

Helping people is important to Doris Gonder.

"That's my purpose in living," she says. "If I see someone who needs help and I can help, I will."

Since retiring to her Menominee Lake cottage with husband Lloyd in 1986, Gonder has used her time and talents to benefit many.

In 1988, Gonder decided to volunteer at Fairvern Nursing Home.

"My own mother was in a home in Missis-sauga and I couldn't visit very often, so I thought maybe I could make a difference to people here whose children weren't close by," she explains.

An accomplished pianist, she began by playing for Fairvern's weekly church services. However, after attending a workshop in Toronto about 15 years ago, she began offering a music therapy program to the long-term care facility's residents.

Several times a week, Gonder spends an entire morning leading half-hour sessions with groups of 20 to 25 people who gather to sing favourite old songs and learn new ones. Most of those who live at Fairvern choose to take part.

"My goal is to bring a little bit of pleasure to the residents," she says. "I involve them and get them moving."

Gonder gives participants rhythm instruments and encourages them to do actions. Sometimes she prepares songs and activities around a specific theme. Often the music sparks memories in people, who then share their stories with the others.

"I also give them Who Wants to be a Millionaire questions to engage them," says the retired teacher. "My husband says I'm working harder at this than I did when I was making lesson plans for school."

That hard work has paid off in a number of ways. Over the years residents have made new friends, relived happy memories and just generally enjoyed themselves. Some who play instruments like the fiddle or mouth organ have also been given the chance to play for others again, joining Gonder as she accompanies the group on an autoharp.

"A resident once called it the shortest hour in the week," she says with a smile.

On days that she leads the sessions, Gonder likes to come early to help serve breakfast. "It lets me know people at a different level," she says.

In 2005 Gonder received the Ontario Long Term Care Association Circle of Excellence certificate from the Fairvern board in recognition of her valuable contributions.

"I get a lot of satisfaction out of it," Gonder

says. "It makes me feel good to think they have a little brightness in their morning. I feel as if I'm doing something worthwhile with my time."

Fairvern hasn't been the only organization to benefit from Gonder's desire to help out. She plays music for the United and Catholic churches in Baysville, led the United church choir until a few years ago, and has been president of her church's UCW for the last 15 years.

"Right now we are in charge of the music for the World Day of Prayer service taking place at 1:00 p.m. on March 7 at the seniors' building in Baysville," she says. "It's hosted by the Anglican church this year, but we're doing the music. I'm looking forward to it."

Gonder is also the Baysville Autumn Leaves Seniors secretary, the coordinator of Baysville volunteers for Muskoka Seniors friendship lunches, a Cancer Society volunteer, member and past secretary of the Baysville Horticultural society, and active member of the Retired Women Teachers' Association of Ontario.

On top of all that, she is known for offering rides to appointments and events to those who require them and often does grocery shopping for a shut-in neighbour.

"I couldn't do all this without my husband Lloyd," says Gonder. "He's the one who does all the driving now."

The two were married in 1951 when she was teaching in a one-room schoolhouse in Grey County. Now, three children and three grandchildren later, they are happy to be where they are and to share whatever they can with others.

"This is a nice place to live," Gonder says. "We have good neighbours, and we like to be good neighbours."

This reminds her of a favourite song. "It goes, 'Who is my neighbour? Anyone in need,'" she says. "That's how I feel."

Thanks to Mary West for suggesting that Doris Gonder be profiled. If there is someone you'd like to see in this space, please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metroland-northmedia.com.



Social workers deserve week of special recognition

BY DIANE O'HARA
RETIRED SOCIAL WORKER

The National 2008 Social Work theme will be celebrated throughout the country this week, March 3 to 9. What does it mean? To quote Dr. Steve MacDonald, university professor, from his doctoral dissertation titled Human Rights Awareness and the Professional Performance of Social Workers:

"The profession of social work has evolved dramatically from its early roots based on charity and philanthropy. Its traditional needs-based approach has more recently come into conflict with a broader vision, one with an accent on advocating for human rights."

As social workers, indeed, we still continue to advocate for individual clients, based on their needs. In a variety of settings we assist clients to access services within their environments. But we go beyond that. We encourage them to become empowered to take action to problem-solve for themselves and their families. Then, through volunteering with community groups, social workers are

engaged in efforts to provide low-income housing, special needs for children, action against the abuse of the elderly, woman, children and so on.

We go from the micro, the individual approach, to the macro, social action in the broader sphere. Where human rights are in jeopardy, there you find OASW, our Ontario Association of Social Workers. The list of social advocacy efforts is endless.

OASW's Children and Youth Advisory Group is looking at public policy issues impacting on children and families in regard to, for example, poverty. There are recommendations to promote safer schools. There is political action to ensure First Nations children and families are able to access services available to other children in Canada (not to get caught up in delays as to which government is responsible for payment). They are involved in protecting the rights of mental health patients. They are concerned with increasing employment, training opportunities and job creation. These are just a few examples of how our social work leaders are involved in bettering the environmental conditions of the disadvantaged.

OASW also promotes and protects our social work profession. The most notable recent example is Bill 171, the Regulated Health Professions Act. It included a controlled act of psychotherapy and the use of the title 'Doctor' by health care professionals who have earned this designation. Initially social work was excluded from both despite an Ontario group of health professionals recommending the opposite.

Vigorous action by OASW with briefs and meetings with the provincial minister of health and others, as well as individual social workers writing to and meeting with MPPs across Ontario, resulted in social work being added to the controlled act for psychotherapy. Unfortunately, as it now stands, someone with a PhD in social work cannot use the title 'Doctor' in a health care setting. However in other settings this designation is valid. How fair is that? This is one battle that continues.

After over 30 years in the profession, I continue to be most proud of my chosen profession. We social workers well deserve one week of special recognition each year. Don't you agree?

LETTERS

A 67 per cent pay hike is ludicrous

This letter is written on behalf of Huntsville citizens who are on call, serving on various boards and committees and volunteering their time as part of their job.

The underlying theme of Huntsville council seems to be greediness. To suggest a pay hike of 67 per cent teeters on the brink of being ludicrous.

For most, prior to considering a position and committing themselves to a job both responsibilities and time would be overlooked thoroughly. If the salary didn't compensate for the responsibilities and time the candidate would weigh the information and either reject or accept the job and the salary.

However, it seems that Huntsville councillors

didn't consider the responsibilities or salary before committing to their position because they are now trying to justify to the community why they need more money for their services and time.

Point blank, Huntsville citizens are not in favour of the proposed hike when they have witnessed idleness from their councillors and heard of nothing but money woes, firings and promotions.

Mr. Zanetti, would you be so inclined as to offer your store clerks a 67 per cent pay hike? No, I didn't think so.

Suzanne Gerenzie
Huntsville

Thanks to arena for quick change

I submitted a letter to the editor on Feb. 21 regarding the absence of a diaper-changing station in the men's washroom at the Huntsville arena.

My husband and two-year-old attended another Otters game on Tuesday, Feb. 26 and found that a changing station has already been

installed in the men's washroom.

We would like to say thank you to the person(s) who looked after this so quickly. It is very much appreciated.

Karen Crawford
Huntsville

Prevent a tragedy; test the smoke alarms in your home

With the shocking rash of fatal fires that have occurred in Ontario this winter, I am appealing to every resident of the Huntsville/Lake of Bays area to drop what they're doing and test every smoke alarm in their home. Right now.

If you don't have a working smoke alarm on every storey and outside all sleeping areas, put your coat on, go out and buy some and install them as soon as you get home. If ever there was a time to take immediate action for the safety of your family, this is it.

Tragedies such as these are the reason the fire service takes smoke alarms so seriously, and I cannot overstate their importance. The law requires one on every storey and outside all sleeping areas, but that is just the minimum.

The more smoke alarms you have, the sooner you are alerted to fire and the greater your chances of surviving. For added protection, install smoke alarms inside every bedroom. You

may also want to consider investing in inter-connected smoke alarms.

This may seem a bit extreme, but believe me, if a fire were to occur in your home in the middle of the night and you had no way to reach your children through the wall of smoke and fire, no number of smoke alarms would seem too many. And don't forget to take a few minutes to plan and practise a home fire escape plan with your family. When the smoke alarm sounds, everyone must know what to do.

It is so sad that it takes the senseless deaths of children to make people take notice, but you're listening now. So please, don't just think about it, do it.

Every storey. Outside sleeping areas. Practice your escape plan. It's such a small cost and effort for a huge investment in your family's safety.

Stephen Hernen, fire chief
Huntsville

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Stk# TP8280-A

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**2004
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3.6 L 6 cyl. eng., auto,
74,099 km.
Stk# TP8149-A

\$20,995 + cert.

**2005
CADILLAC DEVILLE**

4.6 L 8 cyl. eng. auto,
54,284 km.
Stk# CP08396-A

\$22,995

**2005
PONTIAC SUNFIRE**

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63,128 km.
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**2005 CHEV
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