

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Freda Healey

BY PAULA BOON

Freda Healey knows just how important a good hospital is.

When her husband Brent was being treated at Huntsville District Memorial Hospital for cancer in 2004 and 2005, she was very appreciative of the care he received.

"They couldn't cure him," she says, "but they sure kept him comfortable."

The couple owned a farm in Caledonia for 25 years and raised their two children there. Their visits to Healey's sister and her husband in Huntsville were so enjoyable that in 1983 they bought land north of town on Palette Lake.

Three years later they built a log home on the property with an eye on eventually retiring there. But first, they used it as a cottage for more than a decade.

"We spent a lot of weekends and holidays here," she says.

They retired to Palette Lake in 1999 and were living an active and fulfilling life before Brent was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2004.

"This was his dream, really," Healey says. "I'm glad he retired at 60 and we had those years here together."

After her husband took sick, Healey spent many hours at Huntsville Hospital with him, and she was impressed by what she saw.

"He had wonderful care," she says.

Healey also became aware of how much effort goes into the making hospital stays more bearable.

"It's the extra things that make it cozy," she says, adding, "And they don't show up on their own."

So, about six months after Brent's death, when she felt ready to be out and about again, Healey decided to join the hospital auxiliary and do her part for others.

"Because of the care that Brent got, I decided it was payback time," she explains.

Healey works several hours a week at Branches, the hospital gift shop. As second vice-chair of the auxiliary, she is in charge of membership this year, and she is also involved in the group's many fundraisers, such as their upcoming fashion show and annual tag day.

But what she is best known for is her own

personal fundraising initiative, which is making a difference one dollar at a time. Healey crochets and donates scrubbies, which are little round scrub pads for dishes and other household cleaning, to the gift shop.

"When my husband was sick, I spent a lot of time just waiting during doctors' appointments and things," she says. "So I'd make scrubbies and give them to the nurses or friends. Then, when I started working in the gift shop, I'd make them and give them to other auxiliary members. They convinced me to sell them in the gift shop and decided one dollar would be a fair price."

She kept track up to 604 sold. "I must have sold at least 700 by now. It's just a little thing, but it all adds up," she says.

One time, a nurse dropped by the gift shop and bought a scrubby. She told Healey that a patient had given her one a few years before.

"We talked and it turned out I had given her the scrubby," says Healey. "She remembered my husband clearly – even which bed he was in.

That was nice."

Unfortunately for Huntsville, Healey will soon be moving south. Her son is building a new home in Beamsville complete with a granny flat for her.

"I'm looking forward to seeing my grandchildren more," she says. "I don't know that I'm really ready to go, but it has just worked out this way."

Healey will leave behind many happy memories and friends. And the fact that her scrubby tradition may be carried on by another auxiliary member makes her feel good.

Once she arrives in Beamsville, Healey expects to become a volunteer either at a nursing home or hospital near her son's home.

"I'm not sure exactly what I'll do, but I'll definitely get involved," she says. "Volunteering is very rewarding, but even if you can't volunteer, supporting any fundraiser certainly can make a difference. Every dollar helps."

Thanks to Vi Bullock for suggesting that Freda be profiled. If there is someone you'd like to see in this space, please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metrolandnorth-media.com.



LETTERS

Forget the pay hike, council

Re: 67 per cent pay hike is ludicrous, letter to the editor, March 5.

Cheers to Ms. Gereznie on her letter regarding the proposed pay hike by council. I can't believe what I have been reading over the past year concerning what has and hasn't been accomplished by our current council and it is ridiculous.

First of all, we hear of downsizing and terminations within the town offices, all in the name of providing a more efficiently run organization, with various departments picking up the now-vacant tasks.

Sounds fine so far, but I'm sure we will never know the real reasons that seem to be creeping out about some of those vacancies. Was this really done to become more well-ordered or just to free up salary dollars for whopping hikes to council? Smells very bad to me.

Anyone who ran for office knew the pay expectations for the job when they decided to add their names to the list of available candidates, and since most also have full-time jobs elsewhere, it was then (and is still now), enough. At no point should their salaries be increased by any more than the basic annual cost of living received by employees in other companies.

We seem to be becoming the laughing stock of Muskoka with our inability to announce and follow through with proposed enhancements to our community.

Gravenhurst announced the plans for their new wharf, outlined the designs and total costs

involved, and guess what? It is now up and running! Bigwin Inn did the same thing with the same results: up and running as planned. Huntsville announces the beautification of King William St. and the new River Mill Park construction, lists start dates, proposed completion dates, costs, and surprise, surprise, once again we are bogged down in additional consultant, architectural, planning or environmental fees that always appear at the 11th hour and seem to come from the same 'old boys' group of companies.

The costs spiral over the top and we look like fools for not having realized these items prior to the announcements. For this kind of reasoning (or lack thereof) you expect the taxpayers to approve your raise? I think not! Salary increases are usually given when earned, or when tasks are completed and completed well, and our council is not first in line for that award.

Maybe council could take a closer look at what really needs to be done in Huntsville (e.g. road resurfacing) before committing taxpayers' money to the frills. If you are looking for a place to put some of the dollars that have been freed up by now-vacant positions, look toward your employees who have kept our roads so well plowed, sanded, and safe during this heavily snowed winter. They deserve it far more than the proposed and avaricious places you would like to install it.

Dianne Adams
Huntsville

Lake association objects to water/sewer funding proposal

I am writing on behalf of the Fox Lake Association to express our concern about the proposal to increase in taxes for all area taxpayers in order to fund the building of and maintenance of the water/sewer treatment facilities in Huntsville and the District of Muskoka.

The full-time residents and seasonal residents of Fox Lake see no reason why taxes on their properties should be increased to cover services used exclusively by the town's residents.

The Fox Lake Association strongly encourages its members to maintain proper septic systems and wells as well as shoreline vegetation so that water quality in Fox Lake does not deteriorate. All related expenses are born by each of the association's members alone.

Owners of town properties, who have water/sewer services, do not subsidize rural and waterfront property owners' costs for private

wells and septic systems. Why should the town expect financial assistance from taxpayers with no access to the town's water/sewer services?

The Fox Lake Association believes that increasing taxes to all area taxpayers for purposes of covering costs associated with infrastructure improvements, which exclusively benefit the town's residents, is unacceptable.

We encourage the mayor and his council to seek other ways of accessing money to refurbish sewage/water systems in the Town of Huntsville and the District of Muskoka. The Fox Lake Association is opposed to such tax increases and through elected representatives will lobby to rescind any such proposals.

Sincerely, on behalf of the Fox Lake Association Membership,

Jim Watson
Huntsville

MP's 'junk mail' raises questions for constituent

I have received four pieces of junk mail in the last two or three weeks, letter-size sheets, printed on both sides with photos and text, from MP Tony Clement.

The messages are meant to make a fool of Stephane Dion and tell me how wonderful Stephen Harper and the Conservative government are. I was asked to select from silly questions and

statements and mail the answers back to him, on the postage-free sheet.

Free postage, I have always understood, is to make it easy for citizens to communicate with their MPs. It seems what is happening here is an abuse of privilege for political gain.

Hugh Reynolds
Dorset

Many Muskokans were Driven to Quit last month

Way to go, Simcoe-Muskoka! More than 2,100 local residents entered this year's Driven to Quit challenge to try to quit smoking for good. Participation in the contest was up by more than 400 entries from 2007 and once again we had the second-highest number of residents provincially participating. Only Toronto had more entries.

Credit for this success goes to the many community businesses and health-care partners who said yes without hesitation when we came asking for help to promote the challenge. They responded by handing out information and quit tips, donating advertising sign space for contest promotions, including information and encouragement in employee pay envelopes, in lunch and staff rooms, at the pharmacy counter and in waiting rooms, via newspaper and radio coverage and

at municipal facilities such as recreation centres and libraries.

On behalf of every tobacco user who is trying to break their addiction, we thank you so much for your support and encouragement. With your help we can look forward to healthier residents and healthier communities. We'd also like to congratulate everyone who has made a quit attempt, whether or not you were able to stay tobacco-free during March. If you are still smoke-free, fabulous. Keep it up. If you didn't manage to stay quit this time, don't give up. The secret is to keep trying. You can quit with practice and support.

Joanne McFarland RN, BSc.N
Public Health Nurse
Tobacco Program
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

Car accident experience shows what a great place Huntsville is

On March 9 I was in an accident on Limberlost Road and I would like to take this opportunity to thank those involved in my extrication and the care I received.

A special thanks goes to the Lake of Bays Fire Department and those on Stns 20, 30 and 50, who responded so rapidly and who used their skills and expertise with military-like precision.

The residents of Lake of Bays should be proud of those men and women who are superbly trained and who dedicate their time and skills to the assistance of others. I would also like to thank district chief Andrew West, who stayed with me throughout the whole ordeal and made sure that I was provided with the best of care and who assured me that all would be well.

Muskoka Ambulance and Huntsville District Memorial Hospital staff spared no options to make sure that I received everything needed for a quick recovery. Also I would like to thank Tom Brown and Lauri Romanko for their quick response and assistance. But a special thanks goes out to Jason Griffiths, Kevin Sommerville and Bill Varcoe, friends who have stood by me and made sure that I had all I needed to recover and made sure my family had everything they required.

All in all, this is one more example of why Huntsville is such a great place to live, through good and bad.

Patrick Wuori
Huntsville

Congratulations to outstanding high school cross-country skiers

Heartiest congratulations to each and every one of the 35 Hoya cross-country skiers who put forth an outstanding effort to capture five gold, two silver, one bronze and five other top-10 placings at the recent OFSSA championships in North Bay.

You have raised the bar for excellence in cross-country skiing for Ontario high schools. The sheer size of your team at 35 members is impressive when one remembers its founding days of seven members including Simon Baron and Mike Bennett.

A great big thanks goes to the coaches, John Cowan, Paul Ferris, Steve Jones, Dave Gibson and Louise Choquette, who have given countless hours after school and on weekends to conduct training sessions.

These young athletes model a healthy lifestyle and a level of physical fitness that other teens can emulate. They also juggle a heavy load of school work, team as well as personal training regimens, extra-curricular activities and part-time jobs. They have not become the best after only a few weeks of training.

Many train year round and can be seen running the trails in the area throughout the summer. They are to be commended for their drive, dedication and most of all their commitment (or what I call "stick-to-it-iveness") to reach their dream and become the best they can be. They will go far in life.

Well done, everyone! We're proud of you!
The Roycrofts
Port Sydney

Thank you, Huntsville hospital staff

I know it has been said many times, but I don't think we say it often enough.

Our hospital is the best. Regardless of why we are there, the caring, loving, efficient way the staff look after us is endless. I'm from the city (22 years ago) and there is no comparison. We are so lucky.

Often we complain about the staff that have left, and it's our own fault. They do get offers elsewhere and that is criminal. We should cher-

ish the staff that is left here and encourage them to keep doing what they are doing, often with very little thanks and a lot of complaining.

From the operating room to the emergency, they are valuable to us and I, for one, would like to encourage folks to donate all they can. From me to the staff, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Ellen Duncan
Huntsville

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