

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Ken McCaw

BY PAULA BOON

When Ken McCaw woke up one morning last May, he thought his right arm was asleep. Then he realized he couldn't move the arm at all, nor could he speak. It turned out he was having a stroke.

"It was a scary feeling," he says. "It came as a shock."

McCaw had been in good health all his life. Since retiring from Bell Canada in 1992, the father of two and grandfather of two had enjoyed helping others in the community. He volunteered as a porter at Huntsville Hospital, drove cancer patients to and from treatments for the Canadian Cancer Society, helped with a local scout troop, and was active at Trinity United Church. On top of all that, he and Joan, his wife of over 50 years, did a great deal of travelling.

In fact, when he had his stroke, the entire family was due to leave for Ireland in just four days' time. "That's where my parents were from, and we were planning to meet family – relatives I'd never met," he explains.

That May morning, McCaw's wife helped him to the car and drove him to the hospital. "The people there were fantastic," he says.

McCaw stayed for five days at Huntsville District Memorial Hospital, and therapy began right away. "They showed me how to use my other hand to move my right arm to show it how to do things again," he says. "I had to re-train it."

There was also speech therapy to treat McCaw's aphasia, a language disorder resulting from damage to parts of the brain responsible for language. He recalls, "I could think, but I couldn't get words out. It's frustrating, but you work at it and it starts to come

back. Brenda (Liddle, hospital speech therapist) gave me sounds to make so eventually I could pronounce simple words."

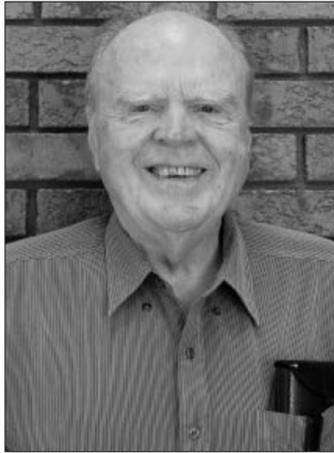
When he left the hospital, McCaw began working with another speech therapist, Valerie Dingman. "She gives me lots of homework," he says. "There are definitions of words that I have to write; she'll give me a picture and I have to write a story and incorporate 10 words she has given me into it; and we'll have debates."

McCaw and his wife are regular attendees at a monthly meeting in Bracebridge for those who have suffered a stroke and their caregivers.

"I have found those meetings very valuable," he says. "They're social and educational. There are guest speakers, and you see how other people have managed to cope and get through things. You see that there is life after a stroke."

Another group for aphasia victims started at Rogers Cove just last month. At the meetings, McCaw's speech therapist offers free group lessons to help everyone continue making progress. "I'm thoroughly enthused with the aphasia group. It's helped me tremendously," he says. "And Valerie is volunteering to help us all. It's great."

When McCaw talks about recovering from a stroke, one recurring theme is persistence.



"Everything to do with strokes, physical problems and speech problems, takes work," he says. "You've got to keep at it every day. And it gets better. Even a small improvement is a thrill. I remember the day I could straighten my fingers out on my own. It was a big thrill."

McCaw experienced a setback last November when he had another stroke. This time his symptom was a terrible headache. Luckily, the effects were not quite as severe, although he did have to resume speech therapy, which he had just discontinued.

Five months later, he is still working hard to regain his former strength. "Sometimes I stumble over my words, and I need to have a couple of naps a day," he explains. "I also can't lift heavy things. But I've been good lately. I've improved my reading and speaking."

McCaw is looking forward to portering at the hospital again. "It's a great feeling when you can help somebody else. It gives you a big lift," he says.

And someday soon, he hopes, he and Joan will make that trip to Ireland.

Thanks to Brenda Liddle for suggesting that Ken McCaw be profiled. If there is someone you'd like to see in this space, please call Paula at 789-5541 or e-mail pboon@metrolandnorthmedia.com.

Take one small step at a time toward green action

Editor's note: This week the Huntsville Forester brings you the first monthly installment of the LEAF column. LEAF, or the local environment advisory forum, is comprised of community members from all walks of life and aims at lobbying on behalf of Huntsville's environment.

BY TRICIA HEALY

Local Environment Advisory Forum

The frogs that we hear calling so noisily these spring nights can tell us a lot about the environment. Frogs let us know that all is not well in the pond. They are an indicator species. Some are declining or even going extinct. They show us how our activities interfere with not just their health and survival but with the overall health of ecosystems.

Disappearing wetlands, poor air and water quality, and indiscriminate use of pesticides are some of the issues that play a role in affecting frogs (and people). There are so many of these environmental issues to be concerned about it can be downright overwhelming.

We can pretend that we won't be affected as more Arctic ice melts and pine beetles chomp their way across Canada's boreal forest, but global environmental problems are hitting us right here where we live in Huntsville. Can we really do anything to make a difference?

What does this have to do with you?

Every action you take has some impact somewhere. Every kilometer you drive puts pollution and greenhouse gases into the air. On the other hand, every time you turn off the lights, TV, or computer when you're not using them reduces your impact on air pollution and saves you money. (Leaving your computer on standby uses between 10 and 60 per cent of the energy needed to run it at full power, depending on your computer.)

Jumping on the 'green' wave

Today things are changing fast. Polls tell us that the environment is a top concern for most Canadians. And why not? Everyone knows that our economic prosperity, especially in a region like Huntsville, depends on a clean, healthy natural environment.

There has been an outpouring of interest in taking action to resolve environmental issues. People are becoming less likely to throw up their hands and give up. There are many eco-friendly products to choose from. There is a growing buy-in for clean technology and renewable energy. The Environment Industry Association now represents 2,600 companies in Ontario.

Taking action is no longer "out there" on the tree-hugging fringe. More than 500,000 Canadians already have environmentally related jobs, from air quality engineering to building houses that save energy and recycle materials. These are people who realize that they can make a living while making a difference. The green wave is only going to grow. It's time to jump on for the ride and be part of the solution.

What are people in Huntsville doing?

There are many effective ways to get involved. Cleaning garbage from roadsides on Earth Day and turning off lights for Earth Hour are small steps, but remember, every action has some impact. Add up the actions of a lot of people and the cumulative effect makes even more of a difference.

Some people have joined the Local Environment Advisory Forum (LEAF), an independent group of citizens that network with other groups such as the Muskoka Watershed Council and Climate Action Muskoka, all eager to take action to make a difference.

The group meets monthly at the Centennial Centre and welcomes new members. To mention just a few accomplishments:

The "Great Plastic Bag Challenge" made a measurable difference in the number of people

who bring reusable bags to grocery stores.

Letters have been sent to town and district councils encouraging action on several concerns from Hydro One pesticide use on roadsides to the importance of using native species in town plantings.

A Green Plan group evolved into the Green Plan Task Force, a sub-committee of the town's Environment Committee. Their presentation to town council resulted in the passing of a motion to adopt a Green Plan, a long-term comprehensive management plan for creating a sustainable future.

Green action begins at home

If getting involved in local politics is not your thing and you have no time for meetings, then a more personal approach can really make a difference. As economist and author Susan George has said, "To save things everywhere, you have to start by saving them somewhere." Green action begins at home. How you use water, dispose of wastes, clean your home, garden, and get around has far-reaching impacts on the environment. About half of the CO₂, a major greenhouse gas responsible for global warming, comes from how people travel and use energy in their homes.

It's easy being green

Many people in Huntsville already recycle and try to save energy. This is a good way to start, but with the green wave ongoing, it's not hard to make a bit more effort and build on what you are

already doing. If you find the number of environmental solutions to deal with overwhelming, just pick one and get started. Many actions will save money either right away or over the long term. They are simply the right thing to do:

Shop smart – buy only what you need and buy local products where possible.

Think before you throw something away. Reuse and donate. There are lots of places that will be happy to take your gently used things, including the Animal Shelter for Huntsville's auction and the Habitat for Humanity Restore.

Carpool, walk or bike whenever that is a practical option.

Don't idle your car. Idling uses more fuel after 30 seconds than starting your car again. Besides, Huntsville has an anti-idling bylaw.

Use a clothesline in good weather and run appliances only with a full load.

Get an energy audit for your home and take action to make it as energy efficient as possible. Government rebates are available.

The more you know, the more effective your actions will be. To make things even easier, get a copy of a book such as *Green For Life* by Gillian Deacon or *EcoLogic: Your Guide to the Most Environmentally Friendly Information, Products and Services in Canada* by Adria Vasil. Or for some well-documented tips, check out the website of the David Suzuki Foundation at www.davidsuzuki.org. For more information on LEAF, e-mail leaf.huntsville@hotmail.com.

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Dr. David Mathies Coin Collector

Dr. David Mathies, Chief of Staff for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare, is like most people. When he goes home at night, he empties his pockets of change. Also like a lot of people, he just dumps it into his version of a piggy bank; a bucket.

What do you do with all your loose change? Do you consider pennies a pain? Why not follow Dr. Mathies' prescription and make a donation to the Foundation? We will gladly roll all that pesky change and put it to good use at your hospital.

How much was in the Doc's bucket? Over \$627! That's a nice piece of change.

Huntsville District Memorial Hospital Foundation continues to support:

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- Fairvern Nursing Home
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