

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Joyce Wilson

BY PAULA BOON

The lessons Joyce Wilson's mother taught her have always stayed with her.

Wilson grew up the middle child in a brood of 11 raised by a single mother in Brantford.

"Mom always said, 'You don't need a lot to be happy. The best things you receive in life are free,'" says Wilson. "Through raising my family, I have realized that she was so right."

Wilson met her husband Dan after high school. "I managed a pizzeria and he was always hungry," she says with a smile.

When Dan was hired by the OPP in 1980, they moved to Huntsville. "We both wanted to raise our family in a small community," Wilson says. "Fortunately he remained here for his whole career."

Together, they raised three sons, Chris, Robert and Matt. They decided that Wilson would be a stay-at-home mom until boys reached school age and then look for outside work. That was before fate intervened.

"Robert and Matt were just 17 months apart, and they were always together. We called them Pete and Repeat," Wilson recalls. "When Robert went off to kindergarten, Matt was so sad."

Then a neighbour asked for help with childcare, and Wilson agreed. "I was going to be at home anyway, and it would give Matt some company," she says. "Little did I know that 23 years later I would be retiring from a career in childcare after caring for close to 100 children."

Wilson found that running a home daycare was the perfect job for her. "It can be hard work but extremely rewarding," she says. "There is a lot to be said for the unconditional love children give."

In the Wilson household, the daycare is a family thing. "If you get 'Joycee' you get the whole family," she says. "I'm lucky; my husband loves having the kids around. It will be a huge adjustment for all of us when I retire in June."

Never one to stay still, Wilson has always done fundraising for various causes. "If it affects me or my family, I'm involved," she says. "Like Mom always said, 'If you want something to happen, make it happen.'"

Her biggest long-term commitment is the annual Christmas Arts and Craft show at the Huntsville Centennial Centre. Wilson started the November event, which raises funds for diabetes research and education, in 1999. Through a voluntary donation at the door, plus raffles of items from the vendors and local businesses, Wilson has raised tens of thousands of dollars. "The people of this community have been really generous," she says.

Diabetes research is close to Wilson's heart because her son Robert was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes at age 15. She also lost both parents to diabetic complications, and a brother and sister have Type 2 diabetes.

"The frustrating part of fundraising is recruiting volunteers," she says. "Everybody is on the treadmill of life. I wish people would come forward and offer to help."

Despite the difficulties, Wilson is glad to contribute. "At least I've done my bit, tried to make a difference. It gives me peace of mind knowing I'm not just sitting back and accepting the situation," she says.

Wilson and her husband will soon begin training in earnest for a cross-Canada cycling trip they plan to take in the summer of 2009 after Dan retires.

Her reaction the first time Dan raised the idea of cycling from Vancouver to Signal Hill was, "No way. Ten weeks on a bike? That's not happening." But now Wilson is excited about the idea. "I want to accomplish one thing I think is out of my reach," she explains.

Wilson knows it will be mentally and physically challenging, but she is confident that she can do it with her husband's support. "And because you burn about 6,000 calories a day, you can eat Smarties and not feel guilty," she says with a laugh.

In her retirement, Wilson also plans to enjoy her gardens and friends and spend more time with her grandchildren, Mackenzie and Jack. "And, of course, I'll continue to volunteer," she says. "That's who I am."

No doubt her mother would be proud.

Thanks to Lyn Bradley for suggesting that Joyce Wilson 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.



LETTERS

Thanks to those who supported Paul S. White during his last months

Three weeks have gone by since the passing of Paul S. White on May 4. Since then I have read the obituary, an article written by Paul Jr. and a pleasant letter to the editor written by John Boyson.

I too recall the first time I met Paul. This was a week before his 100th birthday in March of 2003. He was clearing snow from the pathway leading to his front door with a rather massive snow blower. I thought I was in the wrong place!

I was then guided through the opened front door, interviewed as though I were being hired by some corporate top dog from the city, while managing to parlay the hourly rate I wanted and I never looked back.

My position soon evolved from typist, filer and chauffeur to running his household, becoming a close friend, and writing his life story with him, to providing 24-hour care during the last seven months of his life so he could stay at home here on Lake of Bays.

With the 24-hour care I soon learned that 'continuity of care' was most important for the "older than old" as Paul used to say about himself, and fortunately I was able to rally together six wonderful ladies, three from the Red Cross and three privately.

Not to forget the support from my own family, a couple members of Paul's family and his close friends. The care given to Paul was truly amazing. The caregivers, nurses and his family doctor went over and beyond any of my expectations and I cannot thank them enough for all of their TLC, support and kind words of encouragement. Thanks so much, everyone, for doing all you did, and more, in helping to keep Paul at home.

Jackie Godard
Lake of Bays

No animal shelter flea market this year

For the past 25 years a group of dedicated volunteers have held an annual flea market and bake sale for the Huntsville Animal Shelter.

In those early years, the sale was held in Dr. Ken Stock's garage at the Huntsville Animal Hospital on Hwy. 60. As people's generosity grew, so did our sale, and for the past 20 years the event has been held at the Huntsville Fairgrounds.

Like most organizations, we are always pleading for help. Unfortunately, due to a lack of volunteers, we will no longer be holding our annual flea market. Why am I writing this letter? Even though I have not advertised a flea market for this year, people are still dumping stuff at the shelter. It is bad enough when the staff get to work to find an animal tied to our gate, or a box of kittens left on our doorstep.

This past Saturday we arrived at the shelter to haul away all this stuff, when we found two more boxes of flea market stuff dropped at our door. Jane and Dave McPhee, two new board members, have been cleaning up the grounds of the animal shelter for the past two weeks and we already had two truckloads to take to the dump. Thank you, Jane and Dave.

We are a small dedicated board and we are constantly fundraising to care for the animals. We don't have time to be taking stuff to the dump.

If you have things to donate, please find another charity to take it to.

We would like to thank all the people who have assisted us in our annual flea market. Your support has always been appreciated. At this time, our building is now 25 years old and in need of a lot of TLC. We also get no government funding and are constantly looking for new fundraising ideas. If you would like to help us, please get involved.

Thanks to everyone for your continued support of the Animal Shelter for Huntsville.

Linda Rowe
board of directors
Animal Shelter for Huntsville

School system, not parents, must stop the bullying

Re: *Bullying is everyone's business*, Huntsville Forester editorial, May 21.

Another day to wake up and go to school, dreading each minute before it is time to walk to a place that is meant to be a place of comfort and learning, but instead is a place of fear and loneliness.

A small classroom of not more than 30 students becomes quiet as the teacher begins her lesson for the day, and ultimately becomes unaware of the hidden voices being directed toward one individual. The time doesn't drag on for one student, who wishes that the class time remained uninterrupted by recess and the option of going to socialize with peers.

The second the doors open and the fresh wind hits their face, so do the insults; insults that are often embedded in the child's memory for years, still painful to remember, and the feelings still raw and on the edge of the surface.

Imagine being a parent who has to watch their child break down in tears every day after school, in pain and hurting, and yet there is nothing they can do to make their child feel better. Imagine trying to listen to your child tell the story of their day between tears, because they do not have the strength to put a smile on their face anymore. When you understand this, you can understand a parent when faced with bullying cannot do much more than be there for

the child, especially when the school system continues to ignore the problem.

The day of the life of a child who faces bullying will not only be imbedded in their memory, it will remain there as a painstaking reminder of their past. As a student who faced bullying when in public school and in high school, I can tell you it is a problem, and it is something that was ignored.

I tried to fight the school system (so did my parents), and we tried telling them something was happening but I continued to be ignored. They believed that if they did not hear it or see it that it was not occurring. I found it odd how they did not recognize one student sitting alone at lunch, or one student who was not present in the classroom, forced to eat lunch in the washroom alone, choking down food in between tears.

I often questioned how teachers did not see the physical evidence of having snowballs and other objects thrown in a student's direction. Still to this day I wonder how they did not hear the names that were shouted across the room, and sent to me in notes passed from one student to the next.

When the teachers were approached wondering why it was not stopped, they simply stated they did not notice it was occurring, but I am sure one day will forever stick in my teachers' minds. I was sitting in my classroom, learning the verbs of another language, when my teacher poked

and asked me to come into the hall. The teacher did not have a look of anger on his face; instead he had a look of fear.

He asked me to follow him to the principal's office, where I saw not only my principal, but another person who was unfamiliar to me. He was introduced as the school board's councillor and they wanted me to meet with him after a letter I wrote threatening suicide was turned in.

It was the first time I noticed a teacher recognize something was going on. Can I say something happened in the future? No, I can't. At the age of 13 I wanted to take my own life, and on into high school I continued with depressive behavior as the bullying continued.

The mere idea that a parent needs to talk to their kids about being able to handle bullying, and recognize the signs of bullying, is not enough. It is not something that is easily going to be diminished, but the problem cannot be fixed if the school systems continue to remain ignorant to the fact that they are ignoring the problem.

With each day it does get easier, but memories of those days do not easily diminish. When it comes to bullying something needs to be done. The psychological pain leaves more scars than the physical.

Linda Maynard
Orillia

Traumatized mother asks unfit drivers to stay off road

The full effect of what happened to my family on Monday, April 28 at 11:20 a.m. is still unknown to us. The memories of that morning will never leave us, but I pray they will not continue to be so raw.

After picking my oldest daughter up from her first sleepover, my three daughters and I were doing errands downtown, making the most of a necessary outing despite the wet snow falling. Pushing my six-month-old Isabel in the stroller, clad in a lime-green rain coat with Meeda (five) and Sylvie (three) wearing bright pink raincoats and carrying umbrellas, we crossed Centre Street and stood by the post office to wait for the light to change.

Meeda pressed the walk button and we stood well back from the curb waiting for the light to change in our favour. When it did I said, "Even though the walk light is on it doesn't mean it's safe." So we did our full check, ensuring no one was going to whip around the corner.

The four of us proceeded to cross from the post office on our way to the CIBC with Meeda to the right of the stroller and Sylvie to my right. I saw a vehicle inch slowly into the intersection from the south, seemingly waiting to turn west. This vehicle was not close to us as I looked down at Sylvie, encouraging her to keep coming.

All of a sudden I felt this vehicle strike my left side. With torn pants and a leg that I knew was injured, I saw my Sylvie lying face-down on the road. I am not sure when I became aware of her screaming but in that instant, seeing her there, I thought she was dead. A witness said that they saw her flying through the air. With Sylvie on the

ground and seeing Meeda's face I experienced the most traumatic and terrifying moment of my life. I started screaming and picked up Sylvie.

People came to help and when I accepted that Sylvie was going to be all right I calmed down and used my lifeguard training to deal with the situation.

The older woman who hit my children and me got out of her car and came over to us to apologize. She said that she didn't see us. She said that she had a green light. Unfortunately, she forgot the rules of the road and never looked for pedestrians even though she told me later that she had recently renewed her licence. After talking with the police (who were super helpful), she drove to her home outside of town even though she was at fault and really should not have been driving. Apparently police are unable to revoke licences in these situations unless alcohol is involved.

I am sure that what happened to my family is not an isolated case. There are other people driving vehicles who really should not be. I hope that our traumatic experience might encourage others to abstain from driving before other people are hurt. Please.

My family is very aware that our injuries could have been far worse. Sylvie has a broken left leg that was only brought to our attention once we were at the hospital. Her full-leg purple cast will be on for six weeks and then she will need to do regular physiotherapy to get the use of her leg back.

I have soft tissue damage in my left leg and pain in my back that will take quite some time to work on. My baby Isobel had impact damage to her hip area from being bumped in

the stroller. A couple of days after the accident she had a seizure and was hospitalized for the night. An EEG will be conducted at the end of May to hopefully rule out brain damage. We are praying that her seizure was due to the trauma of what happened and not from physical injury. The effect that this terrifying experience has had on all of us mentally and emotionally is far-reaching as well.

Our gratitude must be extended once again to the quick thinking of people who came to our aid. The men who carried Sylvie and I into CIBC, the witnesses who came forward, my friend Colleen Streight, who took Meeda and Isabel off the road and continued to be with us, the staff at CIBC for their kindness as we waited for the ambulance to come, my friend Karen Felhaber, who ran over to CIBC from Hometown Pharmacy in case she knew who had been hit, Constable Carrie van Beek and her partner, the paramedics, Dr. James McDonald and the hospital staff involved, and everyone else who helped that day. We are deeply grateful. Our friends, family and people we don't even know have been so supportive through their prayers, actions and encouragement. God has been so good, as always.

In setting the record straight, it was not my intention to cause more pain to the woman who hit us. Sylvie and I called and told her we forgave her and we pray that she is getting the support she needs. The choices we make impact our lives and the lives of others. Our hope is that our experience is not in vain.

Heather Berg (nee Cassie)
Huntsville



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