

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Bess Coleman

BY PAULA BOON

In everything she does, Bess Coleman embraces life.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in her work as a doula — someone who provides physical and emotional support to women in labour.

"I'm working for the person, not a hospital or doctor," explains Coleman, who has been present for several hundred births in the last 15 years. "I'm there for them from the beginning to the end — and beyond."

The mother of three now-grown children became interested in this kind of work through personal experience. "With my second child, I was able to experience the incredible difference of having someone supportive with you through the whole process, plus extensive prenatal care so when the time came I really felt I knew the person," she says.

Because of that, Coleman decided she would like to become a midwife. She applied several times to a midwifery program, without any luck. "At that time the program was just beginning and there weren't a lot of people for students to do practicums with," she says. "Out of 600 who applied each year, only about 17 were accepted."

Then, in 1994, she began working with area midwife Susan Columbia during home births. "Because she was in solo practice, she needed a second attendant. The experience was invaluable and wonderful," says Coleman. While working with Columbia, Coleman also took a variety of childbirth education and doula courses in Toronto.

In 2001, Coleman began her own doula service called Birthings, through which she supports people who have decided to have their babies in a hospital with a doctor. Coleman goes to

the woman's home once labour is established and continues to provide support at the hospital. "Nurses change shifts and they're in and out," she says. "I stay from beginning to beginning."

For the past two years Coleman has offered the additional option of hypno-birthing, which involves meeting for six sessions before the birth to learn relaxation strategies and identify and work through fears.

"Fear is the worst enemy at that time because it causes tension and inhibits your body's natural endorphins, which are natural pain relievers," says Coleman. "People are always so ready to relate their negative birth experiences. Collectively women develop fear around the whole experience that works against their body's effort to give birth. In hypno-birthing we try to erase that fear."

In addition to her doula service, Coleman sometimes works for Midwives of Muskoka as second attendant.

Coleman's trust in the power of natural rhythms and processes is also reflected in the rest of her life. For example, in the soaps she has been making since 2000, she uses all-natural ingredients, including various herbs and essential oils. "I also make bee balm, which is good for babies' bums," Coleman says. "Soap is something we have to use every day, and so many ingredients of cosmetics, lotions etc. are actually harmful. I want to make things that are conducive to life." She sells the products at the Christmas



Craft Fair at Riverside Public School each year.

Coleman, who grew up in Toronto and had a family cottage in Muskoka, also feels close to nature when she is taking photos. In fact, she attended Humber College to study photography. "To me it was always an expression of art," she says. "I didn't want to make a living as a wedding or portrait photographer. I'm usually more into pictures of nature than people."

Her work as a mail carrier for Canada Post allows Coleman to make a living while pursuing her passions, and she feels very privileged. This, in turn, makes her want to give back. She has travelled twice to Guatemala and once to Peru to volunteer. "Those were really, really important and beautiful experiences," she says, adding that she looks forward to another opportunity to help, and learn from, people in other countries.

When asked what the future holds, Coleman says she hopes to continue along the path she is on. And she definitely plans to stay in Huntsville. "There are lots of really creative, connected people here, such a huge network of those kinds of people that I'm quite happy here," she says.

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

If cigarettes are kept out of sight, then alcohol should be, too

As of May 31 all retailers have had to cover up their Health Canada Warning-plastered cigarettes. Why is it that there are no warnings on alcohol products and that they may be kept in plain sight? Is this because the alcohol products are sold by the Liquor Control Board of Ontario?

Here are some interesting facts:

Based on published studies, Roizen summarized the percentages of violent offenders who were drinking at the time of the offense as follows: up to 86 per cent of homicide offenders, 37 per cent of assault offenders, 60 per cent of sexual offenders, up to 57 per cent of men and 27 per cent of women involved in marital violence, and 13 per cent of child abusers.

These figures are the upper limits of a wide range of estimates. In a community-based study, Permanen found that 42 per cent of violent crimes reported to the police involved alcohol, although 51 per cent of the victims interviewed believed that their assailants had been drinking.

A fact of alcoholism is that alcohol affects other body systems as well. Gastrointestinal tract irritation can happen with erosion of the esophagus and stomach linings, causing nausea, vomiting and even bleeding.

Additional alcoholism facts are that vitamins will not be absorbed properly, which can lead to

nutritional deficiencies if alcohol use continues. Liver disease may develop and can lead to cirrhosis. The muscles of the heart may be affected. Sexual dysfunction may occur in men causing problems with erections and women can cease having monthly periods.

How many tax dollars are spent in health care for alcohol-related illnesses, including Fetal Alcohol Disorder, depression, accidents causing anything from broken or injured limbs to death in car, boat and ATV accidents? And yet there is no warning on the packaging of alcohol products nor are they hidden out of sight.

Perhaps, to be fair and provide everyone with as much information as the government expects from cigarette smokers, we should go back to the old practice of purchasing alcohol by form and have the attendant at the liquor store go to the back room to get our purchase, which is out of our sight. Because we all know if we can't see the product (such is the case with the government's new rules regulating cigarette products) that we won't buy them.

Yes, I do agree that both tobacco products and drinking are not the best for you, but at least let's be fair!

Joan Montrait
Baysville

New gun policies make no sense

An open letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty

It has come to my attention that on the urging or provocation of your government, legal and law-abiding firearms owners and shooting clubs are being harassed under the guise of making the public of Ontario safe from gun violence.

Now, and apparently retroactive, regulations regarding shooting ranges are being enforced with draconian tactics upon shooting clubs and ranges (many of) which have been in operation longer than most of the members of your government have been alive.

In particular, one club that has been in operation for nearly 60 years at the same location without an accident was all but shut down because the ranges were deemed unsafe under newly drafted standards. (The idea of retroactive legislation is in itself a questionable legal tactic.) Older gun owners are also being subjected to inspections and possible seizures of their firearms. Perhaps our police should also check seniors for liquor and drug violations while in their residence. No telling just how seniors might inappropriately use their prescriptions or leave them around for some druggie to steal.

This leads me, and other like-minded firearms owners, to believe there are in effect four reasons for this sudden increased scrutiny.

1. The inability of enforcement agencies, and by inference their governing bodies, to cope with criminal use of firearms.

2. Law-abiding, trained, registered and licensed firearms owners are easy targets for scrutiny because the government knows exactly

who they are and where they reside, unlike street gang members and other criminals who illegally possess and use unlicensed and unregistered firearms in assaults and other violent crimes.

These persons apparently are more difficult to find and scrutinize. So, go for the ones on a list: the duck hunters, skeet shooters and target shooters. The same goes for established shooting ranges. It would be obvious to anyone, especially urban voters and politicians, that one could find lots of guns and shooting going on at shooting ranges. The "logic" must follow that these are horrifically dangerous places where any number of gun-toting criminals, untrained in the use of firearms and in possession of illegal weapons, discharge bullets in unsafe situations with little or no regard for public or personal safety. To my knowledge there has never been a drive-by shooting at a gun range in Ontario.

3. The reason to inflict this harassment is to be able to show the urban and voting public that the government is doing something to stem the tide of illegally acquired firearms and the illegal use of those firearms in violent crimes.

4. The "jackbook" diplomacy is intended, over time, to discourage anyone from owning firearms for sport or recreational purposes. When that time comes, only police and criminals will have firearms but the general public will not be one bit safer.

Can the registration of all sharp objects be far behind?

Mike Buss
Dwight

Please return lawn ornaments

To the persons who removed our wooden lawn animals off our lawn in the west end of town for a laugh.

We are not laughing. Please return them (no questions asked). As we are seniors it will be a

big expense for us to replace them. Or, you may leave them wherever they can be found. We would really appreciate having them back.

Roly and Jean Tambosso
Huntsville

Schools do address bullying

Re: School system, not parents, must stop bullying, letter to the editor, Huntsville Forester May, 28.

I empathize with Lynda Maynard's pain as she remembers the insults and degrading actions she was subjected to as a child.

Bullying is a reality in every schoolyard and it is as ugly today as it was when Ms. Maynard grew up. It scars the soul and promotes self-destructive behaviours by the child who endures taunts and cruel acts daily. I have witnessed the devastating effects firsthand and I've heard the agonizing words, "I wish I didn't have to live anymore." I have held my child and tried to give advice as to how to cope with this type of treat-

ment at school.

The good news is that, when I picked up the phone and made the call to the school, my concerns were taken very seriously. The principal of the school assured me that there is a zero tolerance policy for bullying and threats or belittling behaviours toward a student will not be tolerated. Consequences are swift and may involve the police.

I am happy to say that, thanks to the proactive response of the teachers and administrators, our situation has been resolved. When we empower our kids to speak up about abusive behaviour, educators today are quick to respond.

Name withheld
Huntsville

Decision regarding community laboratory testing should be easy

A new provincial review of community medical lab testing says the average cost per patient is \$33 in a private lab and \$22 in a public hospital lab.

Instead of calling for all community testing to be done in hospitals, the review calls for the opposite. They want all tests ordered outside of the hospital handled by private labs.

This would be a grave mistake, one that would endanger the future of health services in Bracebridge and Huntsville. We already know that some doctors have left the area because of uncertainty about our labs' future.

Furthermore, the review's authors admit that keeping community lab testing in hospital has allowed local hospitals to provide more tests faster. The volume of community-based lab tests has allowed hospitals to keep and attract scarce

laboratory technologists. It has made newer, more efficient laboratory equipment possible. And local physicians have also strongly endorsed the model, saying it gives them better access to patient records and local lab professionals.

The decision to keep community laboratory testing at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is now up to the hospital and the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN).

The LHIN must respect the needs of the community and keep community-based testing at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare. Given the evidence, the decision should be an easy one: keep it public.

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union
Toronto

Parking problems worse than ever

Another season of baseball and soccer has begun at McCauley-Robertson Complex, and arriving there last Tuesday evening there was clearly an issue with parking.

There wasn't enough parking last season and now with the youth park, the problem has just gotten bigger.

As we drove down to the diamonds we followed a police car, hoping he was just checking that there were no problems going on, but surely he could see the issue with parking.

I understand the problems in the past with players parking in the emergency/fire route areas and that is just the height of laziness on their part. For that, they have been and should be ticketed. But those who park along the road because there is nowhere else to park should not be penalized.

Two soccer pitches and four baseball diamonds are being used at any given time but there is only enough parking for one sport or the other. Now the youth park has opened, and some youth drive and require parking as well. Something needs to be done to fix this problem. Provide parking for the full capacity or allow people to park along the side of the road, without being ticketed, as long as they stay clear of the emergency/fire routes.

It is important to have these recreational sports among our community for all ages to enjoy. Please, someone, do something about the parking, for the fun to continue.

Karen Crawford
Huntsville

Underwear belongs under clothing

While going to do our grocery shopping, my husband and I went to go to Robinson's Independent Store and there was a very young female outside who was bent over doing something with a backpack outside the store.

This young woman exposed her whole backside to us, showing her g-string undergarment, and not much was left to either of our imaginations. You know, I don't understand why people do things like this in the world we live in today.

They wonder why there are so many assaults

and rapes etc. We need to start doing something about these things. Why should I have to have my surroundings polluted by exposure of this nature?

I think people such as this need to be charged with exposing themselves in public and made an example of. I know the police usually put people like this behind bars as all this is is a form of solicitation.

Josephine McClelland
Dorset

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