

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Linda Rowe

BY PAULA BOON

Linda Rowe is happy to be alive, and she shows it by helping as many people — and animals — as possible.

"I'm always raising funds for one cause or another," says the co-owner of Muskoka Hearing Aids, who also happens to be a three-time kidney transplant recipient. "I just feel really good when I can help someone out."

Rowe's community involvement is extensive. Known by many as the Bingo Lady at the Ravenscliffe Hall, she is a long-time board member of the Huntsville Animal Shelter, warden and organist at St. John's Anglican Church, founding member of the Canadian Transplant Association, Trillium Gift of Life volunteer spokesperson, canvasser for the Kidney Foundation and Cancer Society, member of the Red Cross emergency preparedness committee, road captain for Earth Day cleanup and Legion volunteer. A volunteer at Cogeco TV, she has also done a live Halloween show for the past 20 years.

Rowe grew up in Toronto but spent summers at a family cottage on Skyhills Road. Due to a kidney disease called Alports Syndrome, which causes deafness, Rowe has worn a hearing aid since Grade 4.

In 1979, Rowe and her sister Shelley started a hearing aid business in Huntsville after completing a one-year training course in Toronto. This process was complicated by the fact that Rowe's kidneys failed while they were in school.

Before they could move to Huntsville, the two had to enroll in a six-week hemodialysis course. "Shelley

trained to act as my nurse, while I learned the technical side — how to troubleshoot problems with the machine," Rowe says.

Rowe was on the machine three days a week from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. until her first transplant in March of 1980.

When that kidney failed in 1982, complications almost killed her. "At one point I was coming in and out of consciousness and I saw a man at the foot of the bed surrounded by a white light, raising his hands up," she says. "I held on to the sides of my bed and said, 'I'm not going anywhere.'"

Back on dialysis again, Rowe decided that instead of sitting around feeling sorry for herself, she would get involved in her community. "I saw an ad for the animal shelter in the paper and answered it," she says. "I've been on the board ever since."

Many in Huntsville know Rowe as a weekend DJ for the local radio station. When business was slow in 1983, she got a job as a weekend news director and became a DJ in 1990. "It's fun. I enjoy it," she says.

In 1984, Rowe was healthy enough for another transplant. But the kidney she received in July of that year only worked for one and a half days before shutting down.

On Valentine's Day 1985, she got the call that a third kidney was available for her, and it was transplanted the



next day. "I haven't looked back since," she says.

Rowe attended her first Transplant Games in 1987. "They were in Innsbruck, Austria that year," she says. "The goal of the games is to motivate recipients to remain active and healthy and to show the public that transplants work."

While the nine Canadians who attended that year didn't place well, they were inspired to form the Canadian Transplant Association.

For that organization and the Trillium Gift of Life foundation, Rowe has given many talks about the importance of donating organs. "Donors are needed now more than ever," she says. "In 1980 the wait for a kidney was two years. Now it's eight years. And you need to

talk to your loved ones about your wishes. An organ donor card is not a legal document."

Happily married for three years, Rowe makes the most of every moment. "In the back of my mind is always the fact that you never know how much time you have," she says. "A kidney can be rejected even after 30 years."

Plus, she says, she owes it to her donor. "Someone gave me a second chance at life and in their honour I'm living life to the fullest," she says. "I thank my donor every day."

Thanks to Jane McPhee for suggesting that Linda Rowe be profiled.

Ontario Women's Directorate aims to raise public awareness through Women Abuse Prevention Month

BY JENNY CRESSMAN

On average, two women are killed each month in Ontario by their intimate partners, according to Deb Matthews, the minister responsible for women's issues.

Her message is part of the information on the Ontario Women's Directorate website, announcing the start of Woman Abuse Prevention Month in this province. November was first recognized as Wife Assault Prevention Month in Ontario in 1986 but, in 2005, the name was changed to the more comprehensive Woman Abuse Prevention Month. The intent of this designation is to raise awareness about violence against women and its prevention.

"It is every woman's fundamental right to live in safety and security in their homes and communities — free from the threat of violence," states the website's introductory section. That's a message the Muskoka Women's Advocacy Group (MWAG) and many other organizations and individuals have long been proclaiming.

MWAG has been actively working to prevent violence and abuse since its inception in 1984, including providing a safe haven for women fleeing abuse at the two shelters it

now operates in this area, Muskoka Interval House (MIH) in Bracebridge and Chrysalis in Huntsville. These shelters hope to provide refuge to all women in Muskoka who require support to break free from abuse.

The newly installed MWAG board of directors for 2008-2009 will continue to seek an end to violence against women throughout the year, although the special focus for November is abuse prevention. The current board was elected at MWAG's annual general meeting on Oct. 4 and positions were subsequently determined at their first monthly meeting near the end of October.

The MWAG board is made up of volunteers from across Muskoka: Gillian Lachance and Jessica Tickle will be serving as co-chairs; Anne MacDonald, secretary; Gary Lachance, treasurer; Sharon Smith, Lynne Newell and Karen Burns are returning members; Sue Burke and John Pantaleo are beginning their first term. There are still a few vacant seats, and anyone who is interested in serving on the board or becoming a volunteer should contact a current board member or one of MWAG's shelters for information.

Muskoka, as lovely as it may be, is not immune from violence and abuse. Both of

the local shelters for abused women and their children are busy places and data for this region would echo provincial statistics very closely.

A variety of information on abuse, including a list of warning signs, can be found on the Ontario Women's Directorate website. Here is a sampling of current statistics:

- Domestic violence accounts for 14 per cent of all police-reported violent incidents in Ontario.
- Women continue to be the most likely victims of police-reported domestic violence, accounting for 83 per cent of victims.
- 51 per cent of women in Canada have experienced at least one incidence of physical/sexual violence since the age of 16.
- There have been 753 female victims of spousal homicide in Ontario from 1975 to 2004.
- Almost 40 per cent of women assaulted by spouses said their children witnessed the violence, which was sometimes severe.
- Aboriginal women are three times more likely to experience spousal violence.
- 71 per cent of women residing in Ontario

shelters on April 19, 2006 were victims of abuse (others may have been classified as homeless).

- 52 per cent of women escaping abusive situations were admitted to Ontario shelters with their children, and 69 per cent of these children were under the age of 10.

During November, the provincial government has vowed to focus on educating communities and increasing awareness about the devastating problem of woman abuse. Here in Muskoka, there are many groups, such as MWAG, and many individuals, including MWAG's new board members, volunteers and shelter staff who will be working to end abuse and violence throughout this month and until it's no longer a problem. Together, we can stop abuse.

For more information about abuse issues please call Chrysalis (789-8488 or 1-866-789-8488) or Muskoka Interval House (645-4461 or 1-800-461-1740). The phones will be answered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by trained staff. Crisis counsellors are always on duty to assist women who are dealing with violence, threats of violence or any other form of abuse.

LETTER

Mailbox shuffle doesn't make sense

Although I personally have not been affected, I am still outraged at the way Canada Post has miscommunicated, mis-timed and mis-judged ways of dealing with its customers.

Recently they have decided to inform certain people in our community that their mailboxes must be moved to locations of Canada Post's choosing, without consideration of the people being affected. All of this for the sake of safer mail delivery? Hogwash!

The restructuring is nothing but mismanagement.

Most mailboxes on our route have been in the same place

for more than 30 years, two in particular for more than 40 years, without any incident.

Now with two occupants in a vehicle delivering mail so they are not criss-crossing on the road, they decide to make things even more unusual by moving mailboxes to a more dangerous and more inconvenient position.

What I would like to know is who was consulted on this decision and what were the deciding factors?

It certainly wasn't made by the people affected.

Edward Nickason
Port Sydney

Celebrate World Peace Week

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka is teaming up with other YMCAs across Canada to inspire and empower youth and adults to make a positive impact in the world, especially during the week of Nov. 15 to 22.

That week marks World Peace Week and people are encouraged to be peace-builders in their daily lives, as emphasized by the YMCA World Peace Week theme: the Power of Peace, the Power of People.

A special highlight of the week will be awarding the YMCA Peace Medallion to an individual or group who, without any special resources, demonstrate a commitment to peace through special contributions made within their community or overseas.

"In today's globalized world, we are all connected to each other more than we may realize," said Cat O'Connor, general manager of the day camp, outdoor education and international programs at the Simcoe/Muskoka YMCA. "Through our consumption and production, we are connected on a daily basis by a huge number of environmental and social issues, which call us together to create a more sustainable world."

Although peace building is a part of the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka's year-round programs, extra

emphasis is placed on exploring peace on many different levels especially with children and youth. This year, environmental stewardship is being emphasized as an important part of world peace building.

"Our individual actions toward reducing our environmental footprint (are) a key component of creating a healthier and more peaceful world," said O'Connor.

A YMCA Peace Building Activity Guide was created to help youth translate values into actions by exploring topics such as cooperation, empathy, respect, positive communication, conflict resolution and parallels between global and community issues. Parents and educators are encouraged to visit www.ymca.ca to download the free guide.

The YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka believes in the importance of building strong children, families and communities. In order to achieve this on a global scale, peace must be promoted. For more than three years, the YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka has had a partnership with the YMCA of Sierra Leone and one of the primary focuses of the partnership has been on peace building and conflict resolution initiatives.

For more information on the YMCA's World Peace Week contact Cat O'Connor at 705-325-2253.



**MOE'S
PICK OF THE WEEK**

**2007 BUICK
ALLURE CXL**



3.9 L, 6 cylinder engine, auto, alloy wheels, CD, leather interior, remote start. 23,000 km. Stk# TP8499-A

\$21,995

**2005 CHEVY SILVERADO
1500 EXT CAB**



5.3 L, 8 cylinder engine, auto., A/C alloy wheels, cruise control, box liner, CD. 79,500 km. Stk# T8666-A

\$15,995

**2006 CHEV SILVERADO
Z71 4x4**



4.8 L, 8 cylinder engine, auto., alloy wheels, cruise, power locks/mirrors/windows. 44,000 km. Stk# TP8499-A

\$21,995

**2006
CHEVY MALIBU**



2.2 L, 4 cylinder engine, auto, A/C, CD, power locks/windows. 65,300 km. Stk# CP9043-A

\$11,995

**2006 CHEVY
EQUINOX AWD**



3.4 L, 6 cylinder engine, auto, A/C, CD, cruise, power locks/mirrors. 65,000 km. Stk#T8648

\$16,495

**2007 GMC SIERRA
1500 4X4**



5.3 L, 8 cylinder engine, auto, alloy wheels, off-road tires, power windows, remote start. Stk# TP8082-A

\$27,995

**2006 BUICK
RAINIER CXL**



8 cylinder engine, auto, 4x4, A/C, CD, cruise, leather interior. 50,203 km. Stk#TP8593

\$20,995

**2008
PONTIAC G5**



2.2 L, 4 cylinder engine, auto, A/C, alloy wheels, keyless entry, CD. 15,207 km. Stk# CP8615-A

\$13,995

**2004 GMC
SAFARI VAN**



Auto, cargo, 2 passenger, A/C, AM/FM stereo. 97,253 km. Stk# TP8517-A

\$8,995

SHORT DRIVE . . . LONG ON SAVINGS

**BRAY
MOTORS**

**PONTIAC
BUICK
GMC**
CHEVY TRUCKS

GM

HWY 11, SUNDRIDGE

(705) 384-5333/4 • 1-800-989-1113

braymotors.com