

Volunteers celebrated



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By Chris Drost

Described by Volunteer Information Quinte's Irene Halliday as a "fun time with no big speeches," the volunteer lunch at the Bancroft Legion on Saturday, April 13 was attended by just under 200 community volunteers. It was an opportunity for the many volunteers in our community to come together to enjoy a bit of social time and a delightful lunch.

Halliday says, "I could not have done this without my amazing team" who included Gwen Coish of Bancroft Community Transit, Steve Scally of the Lions Club, Sarah Krieger of the Alzheimer's Society, Nancy Mountney from the Hastings Centennial Manor, Mike and Trish Brooks, Kay Fentie and Tracy McGibbon from BCT's Wattle & Daub Café. The committee prepared some of the food, sandwiches came from Foodland, the Wattle & Daub made and donated all the beautifully displayed desserts, the coffee was donated by Tim Hortons and the soup by The Corner Café at the hospital.

The committee pulled off its second volunteer luncheon with only four meetings and no budget to start. Fortunately, a long list of donors stepped forward to make the event happen including: Wattle & Daub, BCT, Lion's International, Foodland, No Frills, Care North Hastings, Hastings County, Community Futures Development Corporation, Art Gallery of Bancroft, Bancroft Pregnancy Care Centre, North Hastings District Hospital Association, Home Hardware, Canadian Tire, Alzheimer's Society, VON Canada, Tim Horton's, Choices Thrift Shop and of course, the Volunteer & Information Centre of Hastings & Prince Edward Counties.

Bancroft This Week took the opportunity to meet a sampling of volunteers from the community first-hand, including Connie Sutherland, who, with her team of 10, dance for seniors at the Manor and Riverstone Residence. Sutherland says all the dancers themselves are seniors. She has been volunteering to dance for 10 years. Fellow dancer, Adrianna, says, "I love the smiles on people's faces and the clapping." They are happy to dance to songs specially requested by residents. One person at the Manor loves "Shortnin Bread" while another at Riverstone always wants to see them dance to "Old Time Rock n Roll."

At another table, volunteers representing BCT and Care North Hastings, were happy to share their reasons for volunteering.

Long-time volunteer, Mabel McLellan, has been a volunteer for the past 19 years. She likes volunteering with people who have the same philosophy as her, that it is important to help others. McLellan has a busy life as a volunteer for BCT, North Hastings Community Choir, four church groups, Peer Support South East Ontario and the Manor in Bancroft.

Ron and Barb Crowder have been volunteering for Care North Hastings and BCT for about two years. They too like helping people out. When they moved here two years ago, they knew no one, then they starting driving for BCT and Care and volunteering with the kids' club at the Pentecostal church. They have now met so many people.

Glenn Inglis has been volunteering at the income tax clinic offered by Care North Hastings for almost 18 years. He says it is a good service and he likes being helpful.

Brenda Jessup is an active volunteer with BCT, the Children's Aid Society and both Our Lady of Mercy School and York River Public School. She says, "People have been there for me when I needed it. This is my way of giving back, especially for the kids." Art Gallery of Bancroft volunteer, Nancy Wilson, says "I like to get out around people of similar interests." She has been volunteering with the gallery for about five years.

Fellow AGB volunteer, John Kirby, has been giving his time for about 15 years. Besides the AGB, Kirby has volunteered with CFDC, Eagle's Nest and on the Downtown Revitalization Committee for three years.

Anne Roney, a brand-new volunteer, has only been with the Community Cupboard for about a month. Her tablemate, who declined to have her name used, said it is nice to meet fellow volunteers as well as people using the service. One of the nice things is helping people feel at ease in a difficult situation.

Ian Hendry says he first started volunteering at the tender age of 16. He has been volunteering in Bancroft for the past five years with the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council and North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery. He said, "It is a good feeling to do something for your community and a good way to meet new friends. My first winter here was hard but when I started volunteering, I met new people."

Garry Fowler is just starting his third year as a volunteer at the fish hatchery. He likes it for the "camaraderie." When he first moved here from Stirling he didn't know anyone. He was out at Paudash Lake North Beach and saw guys putting fish into the lake. He then went over to Haliburton to see the hatchery there but when he was told that the fish he had seen had come from the North Hastings hatchery, he never went back! He then started volunteering here because "if everybody puts a bit back, it can only be good."

Members of the Hospital Auxiliary volunteer team, Gabby (seven years volunteering), Marion (four years), Judy Vance (25 years), Jeanette Howsos (six years) and Debbie Speck (seven years) agreed that the best thing about volunteering is meeting people, fellow volunteers, customers and suppliers. The group said they are happy about raising funds for hospital staff education and they are very proud of their emergency department.

Bancroft Mayor Paul Jenkins, who was there to offer thanks to the volunteers on behalf of the Town of Bancroft, said, "If it wasn't for volunteers, so many things would not occur. Volunteers are the lifeline to the community. While we have many, we need more. I would encourage everyone to get involved."

Organizer, Irene Halliday, is obviously inspired by the variety of volunteer roles in the community. She says she wants to get a history of community organizations and volunteerism in the area together as it is an important part of our community that we should not lose. Right now, however, "we need more volunteers to replace those who are retiring."

To learn more about volunteer opportunities in North Hastings contact Irene Halliday at 613-332-5564.