

As executive director of Quinte's United Way, Lillian Duffy saw countless ways in which volunteers strengthened the community.

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Today, Duffy, who retired from the prominent position in December, 1999, is a volunteer herself for such organizations as the Canadian Cancer Society, the Quinte Cultural Centre and the Rotary Club.

"I think if you take up space in community, you have to give something back," said Duffy, relaxing with an iced tea in the turret porch of her Victorian home in Picton. "For years I marvelled at saw how much goodness and willingness there was by people to keep doing things for others and for their community. Volunteering is so important, and so crucial, that I think everyone should try to do it regardless of how busy they get."

She even takes her volunteering south of the border.

Since retiring, Duffy and husband Michael spend part of each winter in Florida and while there, she

tutors children at a small elementary school in Destin.

"I was getting a little bored and was reading through the newspaper for something to do and came across an ad for tutors, and thought it would a great idea. After the school board checked me out, I was accepted, and I absolutely love it. The residents of Destin are very southern, and the children and teachers all call me 'Miz Lillian.' I really get a kick out of that," she laughed.

In Quinte, Duffy cites the successful examples of The Riverfront Trail and Bayshore Picnic committees "as ideas that saw completion because people got behind them and stayed behind them.

"We have so many talented and dedicated individuals in Quinte who can really make things happen. With the Riverfront Trail and the advent of the cultural centre, Belleville is really going to change in the next couple of years," she predicted.

Born in Hamilton, this vibrant mother of five and grandmother of 11 shares her life with her "very

supportive" spouse, dozens of antiques from an earlier career in that business, and a collection of teddy bears. "I just love them," she said. "Everyone responds to them in such a warm way."

Duffy's varied life includes stints modelling for television fashion shows, renovating an 1849 building in Amherstburg into a restaurant, development director of Metropolitan Hospital in Windsor, a Welcome Wagon and Avon lady, Windsor-Essex co-ordinator for the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and managing director for Garratt's Island, the site of Camp Trillium for children with cancer.

Her "checkered past," as she calls it, gave her the tools necessary to manage an organization such as United Way.

"I have had opportunities and taken on roles that I did not think I actually had the credentials for, and somehow it has all worked out just fine. I loved working for the United Way. It allowed me to meet so many incredible people, many of whom have become personal friends," Duffy said.