

Cecile Flynn holds a special place in her heart for an organization that is all about heart.

She is one of the tireless volunteers for the Ontario Heart and Stroke Foundation, Belleville Branch. Not only is she a canvass captain for all of West Park Village — she goes door to door too — but she also uses her 38 years experience in the banking industry to count donations, roll



HENRY BURY
Intelligencer

coins, and make regular bank deposits for the branch.

"I have a big heart for the heart and stroke foundation because this organization is run mainly by volunteers and I think it's wonderful that the money raised is not being eaten up by salaries,"

said the 65-year-old Village Drive resident.

And the donations couldn't go for a better cause than helping fund research into heart disease and stroke, she added quickly.

"Heart disease and stroke is the leading cause of death in Canada, even more so than cancer."

This month is especially busy for Flynn because February is Heart and Stroke month when the door-to-door blitz of Belleville-area homes is carried out by about 800 volunteers.

In 2004, the foundation's 35,000 volunteers across Ontario raised a record \$92.4 million.

The Belleville branch is one of 76 chapters in Ontario while its 121 Dundas St. E., headquarters is one of 34 foundation offices in the province.

Flynn's involvement with the local branch dates back more than two decades during her

employment with the Bank of Montreal.

"The bank was a strong promoter of community involvement among its staff," she said. "I remember canvassing for seven different organizations in one year alone."

The Tamworth native joined the Bank of Montreal in Kingston as a teller right after graduating from high school in 1958.

She transferred to Oshawa in 1963 and arrived in Belleville in 1967. She worked at the former branch located at North Front and College streets for 25 years before moving to the downtown

branch as assistant manager for two years.

Flynn spent her last five years as manager of customer service at the Quinte Mall branch before retiring in June 1999 at the age of 60 to devote more time to her two grandchildren and volunteering spirit.

"I had some wonderful years and great memories of both customers and staff. The customer makes your day, let me tell you."

Flynn did take almost three years off during her career to raise two sons, Randy and Rick. She and her husband, Lyman, have been married for 41 years.

"Volunteering has been a big part of my life," she said.

She is on the executive of the Catholic Women's League at Holy Rosary Church and is treasurer of St. Vincent de Paul Society, Belleville chapter, where she helps determine the needs of clients.

Flynn is also a member of the Silly Songsters, a group of women who spend every Wednesday afternoon for the past five years, singing to the residents of the McQuigge Lodge.

"I'm no singer but I don't mind helping," she laughed. "It's quite a pleasure to go out and be with the seniors."

But the heart and stroke foundation remains quite dear to Flynn.

"I have many in my family who have been affected by stroke or heart disease and I have a great passion for the foundation. I want to dedicate some of my time in retirement to help this wonderful organization and its important cause."

Flynn has been canvass captain of West Park Village for the past two years and works with about 30 volunteers. She canvassed the subdivision for many years prior to that and continues to solicit donations on her street.

"I certainly do enjoy it. It's one way of meeting your neighbours and feeling good knowing that the money raised is going to a wonderful cause."

She has also been volunteering every Monday afternoon since the fall of 2000 at the foundation office.

"From the day I walked into the heart and stroke office, I was made to feel very welcomed and appreciated. Every day I leave, these people thank you and that's a very nice feeling," said Flynn.

Contact Henry Bury at:
newsroom@intelligencer.ca