

Herman Ebbers repairs equipment,

toys at Family Space

An electrician by trade and co-owner of a Wellington company that manufactures castings, Ebbers said his reward is seeing the smiles on kids' faces.

"I get a real sense of satisfaction in repairing things and working with my hands and seeing the kids play with what I've fixed," he said.

Ebbers began volunteering at Family Space in July 1997 after he was introduced to the organization by Harold Goldsman. He was hooked on helping the staff and families using the drop-in centre.

"I came here just to fix things and I've been here ever since," he smiled.

Ebbers drops in every Tuesday and Thursday morning after his swim at the Belleville YMCA. He gathers what the Family Space staff have collected for him to fix and then heads home to make the necessary repairs. He returns with the items on his next visit.

He sometimes does the repairs right on the spot.

He easily spends five hours a week in his fix-it role.

"There is always something that needs repairing and I'm glad about that," he said.

He has repaired and made additional shelves to store toys, books and puzzles and boots. He's always fixing wooden toys that break or fall apart. And he does everything from putting on new seats or tightening all the wheels and bearings on tricycles and bicycles.

"I have a collection of spare parts for bicycles and tricycles that I have purchased or picked up at yard sales,"

he said. "I improvise a lot too on the repair jobs by using scrap materials to get the job done."

Volunteering is also doing a lot for Ebbers personally.

"My speech has been affected since the accident and that's why I enjoy coming here. I have to talk when I'm here and that improves my speech," he said.

Ebbers is a "welcomed face" around Family Space, said Ginny Graham.

"We're extremely fortunate to have someone like Herman (Ebbers) to do our repairs," said the human resources and program development co-ordinator.

"Being a non-profit organization, we just couldn't afford to pay for the necessary repairs. By saving money on repairs, we're able to buy a wider range of toys and equipment for the children."

Graham said Ebbers is a perfect example of a volunteer who doesn't have to be on site to carry out his commitment to an organization.

"Some organizations need things done that, in many cases, volunteers can do at home."

Family Space couldn't get along without Ebbers, she noted.

The multi-service child care organization is devoted to serving families throughout the Quinte area by providing them with a free drop-in centre inside its rented facility at 301 MacDonald Ave.

The centre boasts three playrooms and a gymnasium. Every day, about 80 children and 40 caregivers drop in for all or part of the day and use the equipment, toys and resource materials.

The adults are able to converse with their peers and children benefit by being around other children in playful activities.

"And it's volunteers like Herman who ensure we have the best possible program and equipment to serve our clients," said Graham.



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