

Tomlinson, Gisela

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PHOTO - HENRY BURY

Gisela Tomlinson

Not willing to slow down

STORY BY HENRY BURY, THE INTELLIGENCER

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Gisela Tomlinson says she is doing God's work by volunteering in society and she won't even let a debilitating medical condition slow her down.

She was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis eight years ago and doesn't know from one day to the next when severe pain will strike her.

Yet, the 47-year-old Sophiasburgh resident and certified fitness instructor has learned to cope with the pain and she continues to share her expertise, time and services to her community. She has led Brownie pack, church youth groups and continues to teach Sunday school, coach the swim team at Prince Edward Collegiate Institute and, starting this fall, will help conduct weekend retreats to help happy couples stay happy.

"I'm not going to let something like rheumatoid arthritis stop me from volunteering. I have learned to work around my limitations," she said.

Tomlinson's determination and dedication to her fellow man has earned her top honours from Volunteer and Information Quinte.

VIQ presented her with the 2003 Ruth Burrows Volunteer Award at the 6th annual volunteer celebration in Picton earlier this month.

"I was stunned to learn that I'm the recipient of the award," she said modestly. "I feel very honoured even to be nominated and to win it is even more overwhelming."

Tomlinson said volunteering is rewarding and she just wishes more people would volunteer.

"What better way to show that we care and love another than by volunteering. Isn't that what life is all about?" she asked.

"I feel I'm doing God's work here on earth by helping others."

Tomlinson was two years old when her family emigrated to Canada from Germany.

She grew up in the Beaches area of Toronto and, after graduating from high school, she went to work as a lifeguard and swimming instructor. A year later, she met and married her husband, John, an

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