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# WE SALUTE OUR VOLUNTEERS

## Cancer drivers ease the stress

By JANET BAINE  
Staff writer

Jenny Tuffin organizes the volunteer drivers for the Canadian Cancer Society in Georgetown, but she doesn't drive herself.

"I couldn't find my way around Toronto. I don't even know how to get around Georgetown," she admits, laughing.

What Tuffin can do is work miracles with schedules, matching cancer patients and their appointments at different hospitals with volunteer drivers until all the pieces in her day book fit together. Tuffin tries to have each driver transport a couple patients to their appointment and back again. One phone call about a change in appointment recently kept Tuffin on the phone for three hours, reworking everyone for the entire day, she says.

Tuffin started this volunteer job 10 years ago when she arrived in Georgetown from England and wanted to get involved in the community. She mentioned this to someone and was soon asked to be the convener of the cancer society drivers.

It was all very different when she started. All the patients went to Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto for chemotherapy or radium therapy, and Georgetown was smaller then, so there weren't as many patients. Now Tuffin has arranged for patients to be picked up at their door and taken to hospitals as far away as Cambridge. Last week alone she had 11 drivers taking seven patients to and from hospitals each day.

Tuffin has a list of volunteer drivers, and she tries not to send them down to Toronto more than once a week, although some are only available every other week.

"The drivers are great people. I've known them to change their own appointments so that they can drive someone," she says.

For most people, the bad news about cancer is compounded when they learn they have to get to treatments in Toronto five times a week for five or six weeks. Mary Mann is one patient whose initial fears about this were quelled when she found out about the volunteer drivers.

"When I found out (about my treatment) I was panicking with the thought of the traffic, changing lanes and the downtown driving. To be honest, I couldn't have done it - it would have been such a strain," Mann says. "I can't say enough about (the service). The drivers are wonderful. They're polite, they're

Scott says he sometimes goes for walks and visits his mother who lives in downtown Toronto while he waits.

"I like to help someone who needs some help. For lots of years, your main concern is your family...When I retired, there was finally the opportunity that I could be of some more help." Scott is also on the board of directors for the local chapter of the Cancer Society.

Ken Harris started driving when he retired early last September and he really enjoys driving cancer patients once or twice a week.

Last Tuesday he picked up an elderly patient at 11 a.m. and then a two year old girl and her mother. He took the elderly woman to her appointment at Mount Sinai Hospital, then dropped the young child off at the Hospital for Sick Children, where she was being admitted for a few days.

He went to the transportation centre at Princess Margaret Hospital and waited for the first patient to finish treatment. The transportation centre is where drivers from as far away as Owen Sound often meet the patients. Harris says he likes to pick up a pile of Reader's Digest magazines and read while he waits, because he never has time to read otherwise.

"They (cancer patients) are very determined people. They're not down, not depressed, but sometimes they're not feeling well on the way back," he says. "For anyone interested in human nature and human experience, being a (cancer) driver is fascinating. It's an inspiration because they (the patients) are determined to come through and it is quite an uplift to be with them."

Anyone interested in finding out more about this service or becoming a volunteer should call Sheila at the Cancer Society office in Georgetown at 877-1124. Office hours are Monday to Friday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.



Many of the drivers were only voices on the phone to Jenny Tuffin until this photo was taken. From left are: Ken Harris, Ron Chatten, Logan MacDonald, Flo Carswell, Dick Shannon, Brian Robinson, Jenny Tuffin, Larry Scott, Terry Clark, Don Parker, Roy Nurse and Grant Johnston. Eleven other drivers are missing.

kind, and they're good drivers, too. Volunteer driver Larry Scott started driving when he retired from teaching three years ago, and he enjoys taking the patients to their appointments.

"They're really great people. They handle the situation as you hope you would handle a similar situation, and they're very appreciative," Scott says. "Everyone has been so positive and upbeat. I have a great time talking with them about everything there is to talk about."

Drivers have to be flexible, because sometimes the appointments take longer than originally planned and they can't be in a hurry to get back to Georgetown.

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