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Red Cross honors volunteers

After years of service to the community, a small family is going through changes but is staying together.

The family is the group of volunteers, who for as many as 35 years, have volunteered their time to the Canadian Red Cross Society to help with local blood donor clinics. Those volunteers were honored Thursday at a gathering at the Lions Hall in Georgetown.

The newly-formed Canadian Blood Services will take over the collection of blood before the end of this year so the Red Cross took time to pay tribute to those who have helped the organization.

“The volunteer component is everything,” said Marlene Beitz, the Halton Hills branch manager of the Canadian Red Cross Society. “It’s what puts a face on the clinic. They are reassuring to donors because there’s someone there from the community. It wouldn’t be possible without them.”

And a lot of them, too. In addition to Red Cross staff, it takes approximately 80-90 volunteers to prepare for and work at a single clinic.

“With a small community, you’re dealing with a lot of people who are involved with more than one organization but they still come out and help,” said Gord Bassett, who has served as the chairman of the Georgetown blood donor clinics for four years. “They don’t expect much in return but the more recognition you can give to volunteers, the better the community is.”

Most volunteers said they will continue to help with blood donor clinics after the switchover. Flo Street, who has been volunteering since 1966, said she has enjoyed volunteering for the Red Cross.

“I’ve enjoyed everything—the companionship and the friends I’ve made,” Street said.

“I’ve met an awful lot of interesting and very caring people,” said Erica Thompson, who has been volunteering for 29 years.

Henry Kroes started out like many of the Red Cross volunteers as a blood donor. Over the years he has donated blood 107 times but his



Among the volunteers honored at the Canadian Red Cross (Halton Hills branch) volunteer appreciation event were (from left) Flo Street, Shirley Chaplin, Gord Bassett, Henry Kroes, Bev Wallace and Erica Thompson. Also recognized were Terry Yahiro, Julia Roehrig, Fritz DeHaan, Heather Morris-Stokes, Marlene Beitz, Eva Cutting and Joan Ford. Many of the volunteers have been helping the Red Cross for more than 30 years. Photo by Herb Garbutt

contribution goes much beyond that. At the urging of Street and Thompson, Kroes started up the first blood donor clinic in Acton 27 years ago.

“I like the personal contact with people,” Kroes said. “I like the volunteers and I like helping people out.”

Today, Kroes continues to volunteer for the Red Cross, driving people to medical appointments. That’s just one of the organization’s volunteer-based programs that will continue after the blood donation program is handed over.

Other programs include a home health care equipment loan service, a senior wellness and fitness program, a first aid program, water safety promotion and its emergency services program, which has helped in the past during the Quebec ice storms and the Manitoba floods.

—By Herb Garbutt, staff writer



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