

Life stories

A celebration of lives well lived and people well loved
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Paterson missed by many, but never forgotten

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There is no better tribute to a life well lived than to be remembered with love and honoured in memory.

That is exactly the case with Christine Paterson — a woman, by all accounts, with a big heart, great sense of humour and a shoot-from-the-hip attitude.

That really will come as no surprise to anyone who knows the close-knit Leach clan in Georgina.

“She was always helpful and would do anything for anyone,” her brother, Peter Leach, says.

“She was funny, like mom, but also someone who told you the way it was — no bull.”

Sadly, the Leachs lost their sister and mother earlier this year.

It is actually a poignant, albeit small, comfort since the two were inseparable — spending weekends hitting the garage sale circuit or shopping.

“That’s probably where she got those god-awful gifts,” Wendy Leach laughs softly, explaining her sister was quite the jokester, especially when it came to the family’s annual worst Christmas gift exchange.

“I was the first one to receive the ugliest vase you’ll ever see as my gift one year,” she says.

Not only did Wendy decorate said gift and send it through the family tree, it was also spruced up and sent as a special delivery from Marilyn’s Flowers one year.

While everyone presumed it was a gift from a special admirer of Chris’, it turned out to be one of the best of many practical jokes in the family.

“Christine had a great sense of



Christine Paterson

humour and of family,” Wendy says, adding it was her kindness that she will remember most.

“She put everyone else before herself,” she says, her voice full of admiration and love as she explains how her sister ensured her three adult sons were looked after in the event of her death.

“She knew how sick she was, but none of us ever knew it and I had no idea what she had put into place for them until I dealt with her estate,” she explains.

“The way that she looked after them and their futures is simply incredible and it brings a tear to my eye just thinking about it,” she says of her sister, who practically raised her three boys by herself, being a young widow.

It was a similar proud moment for the Leach family when Chris was recognized by an entire community for the impact she made in so many lives.

Known to many as the friendly, knowledgeable and witty woman with a comeback for anything in the office at Sutton District High School, Christine was honoured with two bursaries awarded at the school’s graduation ceremony June 28.

Her sons — Shawn, Andy and David — as well as Wendy presented them to Jeremy Burrows-Balka and Linnea Geraghty.

Principal Dawn Laliberte spoke highly of the woman who loved to decorate and garden, who handled all situations with grace under pressure and who earned well-deserved respect for treating all students with compassion, while holding them accountable.

Valedictorian Robert Fortier dedicated his address in memory of Chris.

“Our family is honoured that she was so loved at the school and touched so many lives,” sister and partner in travelling and familial ‘crime’ Janet Creaturo says, thanking the school community, which also planted a tree in its courtyard in memory of Chris, as well as dedicated a front garden and made the “prop” room forever “Chris’ Room”.

“What a reminder to us all that making a difference in someone’s life can take the smallest of gestures; a kind word, a smile, a friendly hello. I am proud beyond words for our Christine.”

Chris’ legacy is woven into the fabric of the school forever, the yearbook proudly states in among other tributes.

“Chris was a special friend to our island community and we will miss her dearly,” Chippewas of Georgina Island Councillor Lauri Hoeg Williamson wrote on behalf of chief and council.

“Over many, many years, Chris supported and went above and beyond for our Georgina Island students. She showed a deep caring and understanding in a way that was only hers, because she understood what challenges our youth face in attending school each day. She took the time to get to know our youth individually, she took the time to know who in the community to call for assistance when a student was in distress and she made the time to reach out and make us her friend ... Her wit and her relaxed humour will be truly missed. We loved her dearly.”

Christine died at the age of 65 at Southlake Regional Health Centre on March 17 with her children by her side.

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“Adored by children, universally respected and an inspiration to her peers, Mrs. McCluskey was a tireless volunteer, quick to deflect the praise heaped on her.”

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