

# VOLUNTEER *Life*

Keeping Southlake's volunteers informed

SPRING 2011

## Volunteer Appreciation Night

# 2011



*Over the last fiscal year, 940 volunteers contributed an impressive 88,140 hours to the Southlake community!*

**Attending this year's Volunteer Appreciation event, these are some of the faces behind the statistics.**

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## Resource Centre is “Open for Business”



Nora Jones

**T**hat was the message delivered by Nora Jones to attendees at a recent Cancer Centre Lecture.

What is officially known as the Stronach Regional Cancer Centre’s Patient and Family Resource Centre carries a wealth of resource material for cancer patients and their families, to help them understand and cope with the disease. Taking her audience on a “virtual tour” of the facility, Nora was delighted to see them so impressed.


As a volunteer in the resource centre, she understands firsthand how important access to information can be. When her father was diagnosed with colon cancer, she was anxiously looking for answers to her questions. And dealing with her own cancer, she benefited greatly by obtaining practical, helpful information. Now she is able to be of help to others.

A retired school librarian, Nora enjoys the opportunity to use her professional skills in her volunteer role. She is one of six people volunteering in the resource centre. The Cancer Centre volunteer program is a joint partnership between Southlake and the Canadian Cancer Society. Each of the group willingly lends a sympathetic ear to patients who can be overwhelmed by their diagnosis, guiding them to materials that help them deal with their fears. The volunteer group have added to the resource materials by assembling practical information for patients and their families – creating handouts on local cancer support groups, on area businesses that sell mastectomy or ostomy supplies and on retirement homes that offer respite care. They also assemble kits of pamphlets on topics in high demand such as hair loss and wigs. Nora expects they will continue to add more materials as needed, and as the resource centre grows.



Nora Jones, at the entrance to the Cancer Centre’s Patient and Family Resource Centre

The facility has been open just over a year, but has been under development since 2006. It was researched, designed and set up by hospital librarian Kathy Dedrick. Although it is easily accessible from the lobby of the Cancer Centre, it is not yet well known. What is helping draw visitors in is the bulletin board in the lobby just outside the entrance, featuring a display on specific cancer topics, with a new display each month. When they come in, “people are thrilled to see what we have”, says Nora.

She is hopeful that the resource centre will become an even more effective source of information as time goes on. Staffed by dedicated, caring volunteers, it fills a real need in helping cancer patients and their families when they need it most. 


— June Yates

## Volunteer Appreciation—“A Great Night”

**I**wanted to thank everyone who was able to attend the Volunteer Appreciation event on April 12th. 42% of you completed evaluations, a great return rate, and comments we have received have been excellent—gratifying as well as helpful—in ensuring that we continue to provide you with the kind of event that is appreciated by the majority (we can’t please everybody, although we do try!!).

Thank you to **Oliver Merk, Maureen White, Ruth Joshua** and **Kathryn Henkenhaf** for so eloquently sharing your perspectives of your volunteer experiences. This portion of the evening is always

well received by all those present, because people speak from the heart and we can all feel it. I know it usually brings a tear to my eye!

Congratulations to student volunteer, Aashka Bhatt, one of the winners of the \$1000 scholarships awarded through the Newmarket Marathon Bridge group, who also spoke passionately about her role. Ruth Joshua said a short but beautiful grace on our behalf, which I am sure contributed to our enjoyment of the food. All in all, a great night! 

— Mary Ryan, Manager, Community Resources Department

## Volunteer Leaders' Council (VLC) Update

The Volunteer Leaders' Council, which is made up of staff and volunteers, is working on projects to enhance the volunteer experience, to make the role of the volunteer at Southlake more rewarding. Their 2010-13 work plan focuses on three key areas, being addressed by three teams of Council members.

### Communications/Networking/Staff/Volunteer Relationships

Asking the question, "If the perfect staff/volunteer relationship existed, what would it consist of?" the team will be meeting to discuss how to address four key ideas they have identified:

#### Great communication

- Everyone contributing to departmental goals regardless of rank
- Problem resolution with no hard feelings/ minimal conflict
- Role clarity – where all staff know and understand the role of volunteers, volunteer trainers and staff liaisons.


#### Volunteer Education

This team is focusing on organizing a library of volunteer-related materials as a resource to the volunteer group. They plan to purchase a bookcase to house these materials, to be located in the Community Resources Department. Further, they plan to recruit for a new volunteer position – that of education

volunteer – to maintain the library and to look for internal and external opportunities for volunteer education.

#### Program Development

The Volunteer Program Development Team's purpose is to explore alternative opportunities for our volunteers. The six-month goal is to identify gaps in service that can be filled by a volunteer. A survey will be developed to help address any identified gaps. The team also are in the process of gathering information from other hospitals about opportunities they offer in the following ways: one-time only; special project(s); casual volunteering; event based (on- and/or off-site); committee work; and virtual (via computer), family and corporate volunteering (where the staff of a specific company gets involved).

The VLC consists of volunteers and staff from the Community Resources Department, Spiritual Care, the Cancer Centre, Foundation and Southlake Residential Care Village and is chaired by Mary Ryan, Manager, CRD. They represent 106 departments served by 940 volunteers in the last fiscal year. If you are interested in finding out more about the work of the Volunteer Leaders' Council or want to get involved, please contact Mary Ryan, Manager, Community Resources at 905-895-4521 ext. 2198 or [mryan@southlakeregional.org](mailto:mryan@southlakeregional.org). 

## Scholarship Awards for Student Volunteers

Every year Newmarket's Marathon Bridge Club raises money to provide deserving Southlake Regional Health Centre volunteers who are graduating high school with a scholarship for their post-secondary education. Since the bridge club was founded in 1981, they have awarded an amazing total of \$81,000! This year the winners of the scholarships were **Heather Clark, Aashka Bhatt** and **Sorina Stef**.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL BORISKO

Mary Stevens of the Marathon Bridge Club, and Aashka Bhatt

Heather has been a volunteer in the Gift Shop since May 2009, donating over 300 hours to the hospital. Aashka volunteered in the Gift Shop, then transferred to the ER. She started at Southlake in October 2009 and has donated over 250 volunteer hours. Sorina has been volunteering at Southlake Residential Care Village since October 2009 and has donated close to 179 hours in her volunteer role. Heather was unable to attend the awards presentation and Sorina was on a school trip to Europe when the awards were presented.

— Cynthia Gordon, Volunteer Specialist

## Blue Jackets Making an Impact—



*In the photos on these pages, just a few of the volunteer teams helping ER patients and their families.*

**T**he elderly woman is frail and pale. She has been brought in to the Emergency Department by ambulance a while ago, suffering shortness of breath. Lying on a gurney in the EMS hall as doctors and nurses rush by her attending to other patients, she is frightened and a little confused. A person with a blue jacket and a kind face appears in her field of vision and speaks to her – “Can I get you anything, would you like a warm blanket?” they say. “Yes please, but I don’t know what’s happening. How much longer I am going to have to stay here?” she asks. When the blue jacket returns with a warm blanket and a smile, they tell her the nurses are doing all they can to get her in to the next available bed, and with that the lady feels a little reassured, a little less anxious.

Meanwhile, out in the Triage area, a woman carrying a small child comes in, somewhat agitated. “Do you need to see a doctor?” asks a person in a blue jacket near the door. “I’m looking for my husband,” says the woman anxiously, “I got a call from his workplace to say he’d had an accident.” “I can find out where he is and take you to him,” says the volunteer, who after checking on a computer in the waiting room, comes back with a smile and says “follow me”...

A voice comes over the loudspeaker for a volunteer to go to the Yellow Zone for a lab pick-up. Another volunteer on shift heads down to collect the blood sample and send it to the lab via the tube system.

“When you’re done, could you also get a sandwich or something to eat for the person in Room 8?” asks the nurse. So the volunteer pops their head into room 8 to see if they have a preference of sandwich. “I’ll see what I can find for you,” they say. The tuna sandwich and apple juice they bring is the first thing the patient has eaten since the night before, and is more than welcome.

The waiting room is filling up. A man on crutches and in obvious pain approaches the blue-jacketed volunteer to ask how long his wait is going to be. The volunteer goes to the nurse at the pre-triage screening desk and tries to get a bit more information for him. “You are third on the list to go into fast track, but it’s impossible to say how long the wait will be, I’m afraid,” they come back and say “but can I get you a wheelchair”? The man is grateful for the offer – anything to make his wait a little more bearable.



The volunteer notices that there is only one wheelchair left at the front entrance now, so heads out into the corridors of the hospital to round up more – they are always in demand.

Meanwhile in one of the acute beds in emergency, a man awaits test results. He has been in the ER for over a day now and is feeling a mix of boredom and anxiety. Not just about his symptoms either – he runs

## One Act of Kindness at a Time


his own business and is worried about being absent and what implications his health problems may have long term on his business. So it's so refreshing when a blue jacket appears at the edge of the curtain and asks him if he needs anything and then gets chatting to him. How nice to feel "normal" by having a conversation about something other than his symptoms!

As the volunteer returns with wheelchairs, a woman in the waiting room is thirsty and asks where she can find a glass of water. "I'll just have to check to see if you're allowed anything to drink", they say. After speaking to the nurse, they return and explain to the woman that she is not allowed anything to eat or drink for the time being, "I'm so sorry, there's nothing worse than being thirsty, but they want to do tests and you need to wait until after they're done – just hang in there" they say. This is not what the woman wanted to hear, but at least she knows the situation now, and maybe she can "hang in there" for a little longer.

Just then, a middle-aged woman comes in, looking for her elderly aunt. When she gives the last name, the volunteer immediately recognizes it as that of the lady on the gurney. "She'll be glad that someone is here," says the volunteer and takes the woman through to her aunt, now finally in a cubicle of her own. "Do let any one of us know if you need anything," says the volunteer before leaving them together.

It's the end of the shift for these volunteers, but they know that the next team will pick up where they left off, providing continuity in Emergency for staff and patients alike. There are over 80 volunteers in the ER, who last year collectively gave almost 10,000 hours to the hospital, but to the public they are as one. And like other "front-line" volunteers, those in Emergency are often the first contact that people have with the hospital, and thus their first impression.

Every patient and family member that comes in to the Emergency Department at Southlake has a story to tell. Sometimes the stories are heartbreaking, sometimes routine, but in all of them, the ER volunteers have the opportunity to make an impact, however small. By being there to talk, fetch a glass

of water or a warm blanket, or help locate a relative, they can – and do – make a difference in people's experience at the hospital. Each act of kindness from a volunteer is an act of kindness on behalf of the hospital – an act that patients and families will remember when they tell their stories. 

— Cathy Hillard



*"My mother was transported by ambulance to the Emergency Department . . . and in a straight backed chair, I sat for the many long hours to follow . . . A quiet and caring voice spoke to me from the doorway and said "you look exhausted and very uncomfortable" . . . (he) quickly and quietly offered me a more comfortable chair and a warm blanket. I have been in the Emergency Department with one or the other of my aging parents more often than I would like to count. This was wonderful!"*

## Positive Results for Southlake Village Hardwiring Excellence



Joanne Kwan

Southlake is focused on *Hardwiring Excellence* into all that we do. The Hardwiring journey helps us rethink how we do things, focusing on our goal of providing *shockingly excellent service*. It means we want to ensure that Southlake is a great place to work, practice medicine, volunteer and receive care. And it means that we are using specific tools and processes that have been proven to make a difference, to make this goal a reality.

At Southlake Residential Village, we know that, if we take the time to find out about issues, explore solutions and, more important, recognize the good things that happen, this improves the lives of our residents, their families, staff and volunteers.

One of the ways to do this is to connect with everyone in the volunteer group. I meet with each of our volunteers on a regular basis to discuss what is working well. And I ask if there is anyone I should recognize and how we are doing with planned areas of improvement, finding out whether there are any supply issues or someone needs help. This information is used to work with staff to improve processes and to address issues of concern. It's also very important to share positive recognition both with volunteers and staff. We make sure that happens!

Volunteers have benefited from *Hardwiring* because we have improved communication with the staff liaisons; (they supervise volunteers in the departments where they serve). I also meet with all staff, discussing all the above issues as they relate to volunteers and the programs in their areas.


In the process, we hear some wonderful comments on what our volunteers are doing: “she does an amazing job”... she really gets the residents involved” ... “he is a team player, and shows respect for all the residents” ... “she is very dedicated and asks ‘what can I do to help you?’” ... “they go beyond the call of duty” ... “she was made for the job” ... “she put me at ease and made me want to volunteer too” ... and more.

All our volunteers are special, but there are two that exemplify *Hardwiring Excellence* – they deliver shockingly excellent service, not only to residents but to other volunteers as well.

**Joanne Kwan** volunteers on the 2nd floor visiting one-to-one, and is one of our volunteer trainers. She has been wonderful in this role, and has helped many of our new volunteers feel comfortable and at ease.

**Winnie Robinson** volunteers on the 5th floor as a program assistant and as a volunteer trainer. She makes a point of networking with all volunteers on the floor, answering any questions new volunteers may have, and helping them look for ways to support each other.

These initiatives are very important as we grow and strive to build a larger volunteer team; supporting each other and emphasizing the message of *shockingly excellent service*. People want to volunteer in a place where that is important.

Thank you to all Southlake Village Volunteers for the kindness, compassion and caring you show to all our residents. 



Winnie Robinson

— Michell Naray, Volunteer Coordinator

## The Excellence Within

On April 28, 70 volunteers attended *The Excellence Within*, an educational day organized to give Southlake volunteers the opportunity to learn about *Hardwiring Excellence*. This hospital-wide initiative focuses on Southlake growing from a good healthcare facility to a great – and shockingly excellent – one.


It was a full, interesting day. After a welcome by **Annette Jones, VP & Chief Nursing Officer**, **Polly Joseph, Social Worker, ICU**, presented “The Art of Communication and Why It Matters”. **Mirella Iacobelli, Manager, Patient Relations**, then explained the Provincial Excellent Care for All Act (ECFAA) and the resulting Patient Declaration of Values. **Waheed Agashirin, Hardwiring Consultant** presented “In Pursuit of Excellence – Southlake’s *Hardwiring* Journey: What is it and why should volunteers care?”; followed by **Mary Ryan, Manager, CRD**, who took everyone through *Hardwiring’s* Service Excellence Standards so all present could sign off on their pledge to *Put Patients First, Give a Damn!, Push the Envelope* and *Honour Your Commitments*.

The keynote address on *Striving for Excellence* was given by **Genevieve Simard, Olympic Downhill Skier and World Cup Champion**. She gave real-life examples about her quest to become the fastest racer in the world. The audience hung on every word as she told of having this ambition since the age of 11 and, after achieving some of her goals, having to make the decision to move on after 6 surgeries, the last of which



Genevieve Simard

left her with 7 pins and a metal plate in her knee. This led to her decision to retire from downhill ski racing and to change careers. While ski training and racing, Gen had had the opportunity to fly via helicopter and was fascinated by the art of helicopter flying. This fascination led to her being trained as a commercial helicopter pilot, recently receiving her helicopter pilot licence. She is now seeking employment in the field. Genevieve’s message of working through one’s challenges and continuing to strive for excellence in the face of adversity certainly hit home for most of us and we wish her well in her new endeavours.

Many thanks to Community Resources Department, our host for the day, to Organizational Development who sponsored the event, and to everyone who attended what was truly a fabulous, fun and educational day! 

— Kathryn Henkenhaf  
Volunteer, Stronach Regional Cancer Centre and at Southlake Foundation; and Member, Volunteer Leaders Council

## Statistics that are Making a Difference!

The numbers are in for the fiscal year April 1 2010 to March 31 2011. And they are impressive!

	2010	2011
Number of volunteers	811	940
Total number of volunteer hours	77,000	88,140
Number of programs/services served by volunteers	75	106
Number of new volunteer programs	8	10

# Volunteer Involvement Essential in Run's Success

Records tumbled on May 1<sup>st</sup>, when 1100 people—including 45 teams—took to the streets of Aurora in aid of Southlake Regional Health Centre. Running, jogging or just walking, they were taking part in the A & B Courier Run for Southlake, showing support for their hospital, having fun and raising over \$73,000 for the hospital, another whopping record!

Supporting them every step of the way was a team of over 150 volunteers, drawn from all over the region. These volunteers – some of them veterans of the event – were involved in everything from race kit preparation to manning water stations and helping with traffic safety. “Without volunteers, we just couldn’t pull this off,” says Steve Hinder, Chair of the run.

The run has its origins in the Hartwell Challenge, which started in 2002 in memory of Bob Hartwell, much loved local businessman and dedicated runner. Since then the event has grown and in the last two years all the proceeds have gone directly to Southlake, and pledging opportunities have been introduced. This has proved particularly successful, with this year’s pledge total quadrupling that of last year. The event

also has been opened up to attract more participation. As well as the Half Marathon, 10K and 5K, this year’s run included a Kids Mini-Mile and a Bouncing Castle. “It’s about providing families who call Southlake their hospital a chance to participate and give back. Many people tell us of experiences at Southlake which have made an important difference in their lives and they want to express their gratitude. We have a lot of folks with stories at this event,” explains Steve.

The volunteers came from far and wide and from a variety of backgrounds, but they all had one thing in common – that desire to give back to Southlake. “They participate because it’s their hospital” explains Steve, who estimates that more than 1500 hours were given to this one-day event. From 5 in the morning, until after tired legs had headed home and popcorn was being swept from the streets, the volunteers were there, giving their time. “We can’t thank the volunteers enough” he says. “People don’t always want thanks, but they do like to know that they are contributing towards something that matters and that their efforts are appreciated.”



— Cathy Hillard



*From left: volunteers from the Optimists Club of Aurora, preparing the Pancake Breakfast; runners starting out for their run; and Steve Hinder with two of the pole walking participants in the Run for Southlake. Photographs supplied by the Southlake Foundation office.*

### Submissions to Volunteer Life

We are always looking for story ideas. The next issue of *Volunteer Life* will be distributed Fall 2011. The deadline for submissions is noon on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. Please forward your submissions (Microsoft Word format) or story ideas to Community Resources in the Central Mailroom or via email to Mary Ryan at [mryan@southlakeregional.org](mailto:mryan@southlakeregional.org)

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