



Anna Farkas has been an active member of the South Peel unit of the Canadian Cancer Society for 16 years. Last September she became president of the unit assuming a role that is time consuming but she feels, very worthwhile.

By Shari Craig

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Anna Farkas' interest in cancer research, prevention and help for cancer patients goes back a long way, back years ago to her native Hungary when she was a young student nurse watching helplessly as her mother died of cancer.

Anna and her husband Eric, a doctor, left Hungary during the second world war, lived in several countries and then emigrated to Canada. They moved to Mississauga 19 years ago, Dr. Farkas built up a medical practice, they had two children and the family settled into the community.

About 16 years ago, Dr. Farkas was asked to address the South Peel Unit of the Canadian Cancer Society. Mrs. Farkas was invited to sit on the unit's board of directors. She accepted, started attending meetings and getting involved.

She became services to patients chairman and held that job for seven years, a demanding job providing help for cancer patients, transportation for medical treatment, hospital and home visits, dressings, and small comforts.

"I was spending hours and hours as chairman each week," Anna remembers. "It was very worthwhile but tiring."

In Sept. 1972, she became president of the South Peel Unit for a two-year term. She is now responsible for the organization with its 280 active members.

"Do you know," she says, "I don't think there is anywhere in the world that the cancer society is organized as in North America. We were in New Zealand last year for a medical convention and they don't have as many volunteers for the whole country as we have in South Peel."

Anna, busy at the unit level, also works at the district level as ethnic education chairman of the Central Counties District. Her role is to deal with women in ethnic neighbourhoods who have little or no involvement with the outside community, to try and educate them about cancer. She distributes pamphlets in different languages and makes films available to interested groups.

"It's a challenge," she says, "trying to reach some of these women who stay home all the time and rarely go outside their own neighbourhood. But since I'm not Canadian by birth and I still speak with a strong accent," she smiles, "perhaps I am better able to reach these ladies."

Anna estimates that her work with the cancer society takes at least 30 hours a week. "I feel as if it is almost a full-time job," she shrugs.

The South Peel Unit has seven branches and Anna attends meetings on the branch level as well as the unit, district and division level. "Some times in one day I might have three meetings or I go out to one meeting at 6 p.m. and don't get home until almost 1 a.m.

"It's a little bit hard to keep up with the housework," she admits. "My son helps and my husband understands.

"When I'm finished my term as president," she smiles, "well, the past president is usually on the planning, development and nominating committee and after that I would help in some job where they need me. But I have other interests. I used to paint, portrait paintings. I liked it very much and I used to do it quite well.

"I would like to try painting again. But I would still help with the cancer society," she stresses. "I think that is important."

What do you do when something happens to your neighbourhood that you think is wrong? Do you report it and stand the chance of being branded a busybody or do you tell your conscience to be quiet and go about your own business?