

Cancer volunteer says she was 'born to drive'

By IRENE GENTLE
Special

Even at age 76, Malton resident Toby Shore isn't cowed by the kind of highway traffic snarls that have daunted many a younger soul.

That's because 44 years after she began it, Shore still knows she has a job to do.

"I was born to drive. Traffic? Nothing bothers me," Shore said with a shrug, at the recent volunteer recognition evening held by the Mississauga branch of the Canadian Cancer Society where Shore was honored for 44-years of volunteer service.

"I began in Montreal and then I came to Maple. This was before the times of two-car families and I guess they found out somehow that I had a car. So a woman called me up and asked if I could drive some people to the hospital."

As it turned out, Shore couldn't — at least not that day.

Soon enough, though, Shore found herself directing her vehicle towards the hospital with a cargo of passengers at the cue of a stranger's voice buzzing over the telephone wire.

The year was 1958 and the hospital was the newly-opened Princess Margaret.

"I went in there and they gave a tour of the hospital. They took us to the children's ward. This was way back and I hadn't known that children could get cancer. I thought it was an old person's disease," said Shore.

"That's how it really began for me. Going to the children's wing like that."

Serving mainly as a driver now in a minivan donated by the Malton Legion Branch 528, ("My sons are all jealous of the vehicle I get to drive," said Shore with a laugh.), Shore attacks her volunteerism

with the same fearlessness as she does metro traffic. "I get very involved. I go to weddings, I arrange funerals. I just get so close to them," said Shore, who has also held dying patients in her arms.

"It's just so gratifying. It's the people, really. I've done just as much as I've had back. It's difficult. I know a lot of people who say they couldn't deal with it. But it's not a case of that. It's the fact that you're helping.

It's a help that isn't always met with outpouring of gratitude, which is the reason the recently amalgamated Cancer Society in Mississauga held their Nov. 23 Volunteer Recognition night. Close to 70 volunteers who have donated from 5-44 years to the cause of easing the difficulties of cancer patients were rewarded with a pin, certificate and peer recognition at the upbeat evening held at the Consumer's Gas building's Blue Flame room on Burnhamthorpe Rd.

"There are few things that give me more pleasure than recognizing the work of volunteers. Your work is critical," said guest speaker of the evening, MPP Margaret Marland, whose own daughter died at age 2 from a form of leukemia that's mainly curable today.

"You're the key to finding a cure for cancer. You're the one people depend on for support.

"We'd have to imagine what life would be like without volunteers.

"Who would staff our women's shelters and crisis lines? Who would staff our food banks? Who would lead our children's guide packs or hockey teams?

"Do you know that if all volunteers were paid a standard social services salary, volunteerism would be our biggest industry? Bigger than mining, bigger than agriculture.

Bigger, in fact, than anything."

DEEL BIOGRAPHY: SHORE, Toby Nov. 30/04



Photo by Jeff Chevrier

Toby Shore (left), 76 years young and a 44-year volunteer with the local Cancer Society, received a plaque from Mississauga unit president Roseline Marshall Wednesday night at the Society's volunteer recognition night ceremonies.