



## PROFILES - KAL TIRE'S ROAD HEROS CONTEST WINNERS

### ONTARIO

#### **Diane Thompson**

Diane Thompson, a 78-year-old Dunsford, ON resident, has been a volunteer driver for 30 years. Last year she logged 17,500 km for Community Care Health & Care Network, a Lindsay-based organization that arranges transportation for people in need. For many years, she drove local cancer patients to treatment in Ontario, overcoming busy rush-hour traffic on the 401 and long days to serve her community.

Thompson initially became a volunteer driver because she was a foster parent and looked forward to adult conversation and a break from the house, but quickly saw how rewarding and meaningful her volunteer driving could be. She currently drives a young woman with Down syndrome to her local day program.

#### Quote

"After this contest, I looked up volunteering and volunteering is me. Yes, it does relieve stress. Yes, it does help your inner self to know you've done something good for someone, and I didn't ever want to give up that feeling."

#### **George Spence**

After seeing a CNIB advertisement calling for volunteer drivers, Kingston resident George Spence set out to put his spare time and vehicle to good use—for the second time. Spence was a volunteer driver for the CNIB as a young adult 30 years ago, and wanted to return to the role now that his children were grown and he had more free time.

Spence drives CNIB staff to the homes of those who are newly visually impaired to support them in safely navigating their own homes. He also drives members of the local CNIB youth group to activities such as sailing, and logged 9,800 km last year as a volunteer driver.

#### Quote

"It's very rewarding. I do enjoy it and probably more than anything it makes me appreciate how well off sighted people are. I see the struggles people who are visually impaired go through, and yet they're so optimistic."

#### **Joe Hall**

Not long after retiring from his 35-year career as a police officer, Milton, ON, resident Joe Hall recalled being a boy and seeing a family friend drive cancer patients to Toronto in the '60's, and set out to do the same. Since 2012, Hall has logged nearly 30,000 km every year driving cancer patients to hospitals in Hamilton and the GTA. He drives four days a week, often through rush hour traffic, selflessly lending long days but also a compassionate ear.

#### Quote

"I was driving two ladies back from Princess Margaret (hospital) this afternoon. One was an elderly lady on a three-month follow-up. She got in the car and she said, 'Joe, I've got good news. They tell me I'm cancer free.' And she gave me a high five. I don't need too many of those to keep me going."

## ALBERTA

### **Trevor West**

When Edmontonian Trevor West looks back on his five years of driving cancer patients to chemo, radiation and follow-up appointments, he hears the sounds of a Newfoundland man singing all the way to his hotel, opening his vehicle door to a woman he remembered from childhood, and the words of a patient he'd driven for 18 months saying, 'I am going to hospice tomorrow.'

A cancer survivor himself, West became a volunteer driver with Wheels of Hope five years ago following his own battle with myeloid sarcoma, a cancer with a poor survival success rate. He's inspired to continue driving by the letters he receives from patients' families.

#### Quotes

"We live for the word hope. That's all we have.

"There's so much cancer out there, so many people who are hurting. There's got to be help somewhere. If we can help them get through one day, if I can make them laugh for 20 minutes, that's good."

### **Barbara Gray**

When Barbara Gray was first diagnosed with breast cancer, she didn't know about patient driving programs, and following her partial mastectomy, she daily trekked from southeast Calgary to the Tom Baker Cancer Centre for 35 days of radiation until friends offered to drive her.

Two years later, in 1997, Gray felt well and became a volunteer driver for the Canadian Cancer Society, hitting the road three or four days a week to help people battling the disease. In 2018, re-diagnosed with breast cancer, Gray took only a short break from driving. Today, as her eightieth birthday nears, she still drives other patients to their appointments every Friday.

#### Quote

"I love to drive. I don't want anything to take that away. It's one of my favourite things to do and I look forward to it all week. You meet so many wonderful people from all walks of life."

"I know how important it is to them to have a good driver they can count on. Because I've experienced it myself, I can hear and listen and give them some hope for themselves. They appreciate being able to talk to someone who can understand."

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

### **Randy Scharf**

Three times a week, Randy Scharf climbs into a van and drives crates of food from the Meals on Wheels kitchen to the depot in Vancouver's Eastside across from Oppenheimer Par. From there, other drivers pick up and then deliver hot, healthy meals to the doors of seniors in need. Over the last nine years, Scharf has seen a lot, but says every minute of that 90-kilometre journey is worth it.

Scharf got a taste for serving his community after volunteering with the Olympics.

#### Quote

"Making sure people can eat is something that's always been important to me. I would hate to think of someone not getting to eat dinner because no one was willing to drive for them."

"It is very rewarding. You get a lot of satisfaction out of being a Meals on Wheels volunteer."

### **Wendy Ireland**

Like many of the contest volunteers, Wendy Ireland prefers to talk about the important work of the Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society (VCDS) rather than her place in it. But hers is an important role. Since Surrey-based VCDS was founded three-and-a-half years ago to help ensure Lower Mainland cancer patients receive critical transportation support, Ireland has become both driver and dispatcher.

Ireland drives patients three or four days per week (she is consistently a top five mileage volunteer among the society's 200 drivers), and she also coordinates up to 50 rides shared among volunteers.

#### Quote

"The average person will have to through 25 to 30 treatments and they can't miss a day—it's very important—but families just can't do it all and that's where we step up. It's a really rewarding way to give back and the patients are so appreciative."

### **Peter Simpson**

When Peter Simpson's mother was diagnosed with cancer, he saw how important it was to her to be able to count on him to drive her to treatment and appointments in the year before she died. When his career as a commercial vehicle driver of 37 years was cut short after losing his leg in a motorcycle accident, Simpson sought another way to get behind the steering wheel and spend his time helping others.

Simpson began driving for the Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society (VCDS) in Surrey in 2017, and has donated back to the society every fuel subsidy payment he's received.

#### Quote

"Everybody that I drive is so appreciative. You can only depend on family so much, and some don't even have family. They're just happy to have somebody in their corner to help them out."

"There's a huge need for this service. People are going through awful journeys. To help them out doing something small like this goes such a long way."

On what his mom would think: "She would be proud. Very proud."