



PC 30 Community Service Award

Dear Judges

October 2017

There are so many instances in community journalism when the sharing of a story ignites action to right a wrong, fill a gap or come to the aid of those in need. We then report on the Good Samaritan or donor who makes change happen in our community.

This time we led the way.

After weeks of reporting about the disappearance of a 72-year-old senior who wandered away from her Barrie home on a frigid February day, Barrie Advance editorial staff was compelled to look for a solution. Despite numerous searches by police throughout 2017, the senior with dementia has still not been found even as I write this letter.

In our coverage of this heartbreaking story, reporter Sara Carson discovered several Ontario communities were using tracking devices to find vulnerable residents within minutes of their disappearances, greatly reducing the angst of family members and cost of police searches. Sara's research reaffirmed what she suspected: tracking devices were valuable tools in the search for missing people.

The newsroom decided to spearhead a fundraising campaign to bring this equipment to Barrie. Capitalizing on my position as a board member of the Barrie Chamber of Commerce, the community newspaper (through its website Simcoe.com) forged a partnership with the chamber to raise seed money of \$25,000.

In May, the City of Barrie, Barrie Police, Georgian Bay Volunteer Search and Rescue, Alzheimer's Society of Simcoe County, County of Simcoe Paramedic Services and the Autism Society of Simcoe County joined with us to form Project Lifesaver Simcoe.

The Barrie Advance reported extensively on the issue and led readers through all stages in the process. Other local media picked up the story, helping us raise funds and awareness.



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October 2017

RE: PC 30 Community Service Award

To whom it may concern:

The Barrie Chamber of Commerce is pleased to partner with the Barrie Advance/Simcoe.com in supporting the development of Project Lifesaver Simcoe.

We appreciate that the newspaper recognized our passion to better our community and gave us an avenue to draw on the compassion of our more than 900 member businesses to make a difference.

When a local woman went missing last year, the whole community was drawn into the search for weeks that turned into months, witnessing the pain of the family, and wondering what could have prevented the situation. Project Lifesaver Simcoe is hopefully the answer to that question; it is a transmitter/receiver system intended to help search and rescue teams more quickly find our most vulnerable residents who have a tendency to wander.

The statistics on the number of residents in our community that have the potential to wander are overwhelming, so when the Barrie Advance/Simcoe.com approached the Chamber with the idea of Project Lifesaver technology, there was no hesitation on the part of its Board of Directors to endorse the concept and support the fundraising initiative for the startup costs.

Thank you for considering Project Lifesaver Simcoe for this award.

Sincerely,

Kris Hughston, Past President
Barrie Chamber of Commerce

Our goal is to launch the program this fall, before the winter weather hits. We are now awaiting delivery of some monitoring bracelets, transmitters and receivers ordered with the approximately \$20,000 raised to date. Police training on the equipment will be held in November.

Like other communities, we plan to lease the bracelets to families for \$400-\$500 but want to ensure all those who need them get them, regardless of their ability to pay. This involves an annual fundraising plan to sustain the project. Our ultimate goal is to extend Project Lifesaver Simcoe throughout Simcoe County, including all seven Metroland community newspapers in the region.

What started as coverage of a news story in our community has resulted in our readers, the business community, city hall, police and local organizations uniting to assist our most vulnerable residents. Project Lifesaver Simcoe is a terrific example of how pivotal a newspaper can be in performing community service while driving positive change within its coverage area.

Thank you for considering the Barrie Advance and Project Lifesaver Simcoe for this recognition.

Sincerely,

Lori Martin
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705-726-0573, ext. 267

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SAVING LIVES

Tracking seniors cuts search times for dementia patients

Sara Carson/Metroland

Rick Ellsmere would like more protection for seniors with dementia. In March, his father Robert, 82, went missing from the home they share. Luckily, Robert was found safe.

SARA CARSON
scarson@simcoe.com

Rick Ellsmere pulls into the driveway of his Hillsdale home and immediately fears the worst. His 82-year-old father's nasal oxygen tube dangling from the handle of the snowblower was a clear

indication something was wrong. Ellsmere, a Springwater firefighter, frantically searched the house and, when he didn't find Robert, he called 911.

"You think about Mandy. Your mind automatically goes to the worst," Rick said.

Mandy Thompson, 72, left her

Barrie home on foot Feb. 3. She has yet to be found as of April 13. Police say Thompson suffers from dementia.

Luckily for the Ellsmere family, Robert was found in the emergency department of Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre. Rick doesn't know exactly how he got

there.

"He's told me about five different stories," Rick said.

Robert has since been diagnosed with dementia.

Rick is looking for a solution to protect Robert from future disap-

● See COUNTY page 6

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County departments not using tracking technology

Continued from front

pearances. And he's not alone.

Families have been asking the Alzheimer Society of Simcoe County about personal tracking devices, and similar technology, said Laura-Lynn Bourassa, manager of education and support programs.

In Ontario, three out of five people living with dementia will wander at some point. And in Simcoe County, there are approximately 8,400 people over the age of 65 living with dementia, Bourassa said.

That's 5,040 potential wanderers.

Simcoe County departments are not using tracking technology, but some Ontario forces have embraced it.

Guelph Police Service is a member of Project Lifesaver, which uses FM radio frequencies to locate missing people.

Vulnerable citizens voluntarily sign-up and wear a watch-sized bracelet that emits a unique FM radio frequency signal every second. The police have a satellite receiver, and when someone goes missing, it's tuned to pick up their frequency.

"We consider it another tool in the box," said Const. Gord Woods, program coordinator.

When it comes to locating missing people, radio frequencies are more reliable than GPS, Woods said.

"The best analogy is if you think about pulling into a parking garage, your



Graham Paine/Metroland

Halton police Search Incident Response Team (S.I.R.T) members are trained in Project Lifesaver Halton, a radio frequency tracking program. Halton police S.I.R.T. member Const. Brandon Keeping uses the hand-held frequency receiver to locate a radio signal.

GPS quits working, but the FM radio in your car keeps playing," Woods said. "The technology we use is radio because radio waves will go through structures."

He shared a story about their first client.

"When he did not have the bracelet he went missing on a cold November night. He had been gone seven and a half hours by the time (two citizens) found him," Woods said.

The man was hypothermic and dehydrated and was sent to the hospital.

The cost of this search and rescue alone would have funded all of the Project Lifesaver equipment, Woods said.

When the man came out of the hospital, he joined Project Lifesaver. He went missing again in January on an even colder night.

"It was two officers on duty who found him and had him back within 15 minutes of getting the call," Woods said.

Guelph Police Service has 30 clients using Project

Lifesaver. Clients are charged an initial fee of \$400 for the tracking bracelet. And Woods said families who find the cost too high can get financial assistance from a local service club.

Project Lifesaver is a not-for-profit organization based out of Virginia. Recovery times for its clients average 30 minutes, states its website. In Ontario, Guelph, Niagara, Peel, York and Halton police, among others, use the service.

The transmitter used by Project Lifesaver has an approximate range of 1.6 kilometres under ideal conditions.

Sault Search and Rescue, serving Sault Ste Marie and Algoma in north-eastern Ontario, has used Project Lifesaver since 2012.

Randall Roy, past president of the volunteer team, said the startup cost is \$15,000. And there are annual costs to keep the program running. For example, batteries must be

replaced every two months.

Roy said the cost is worth it: "The bottom line is it saves lives."

He would like to see Project Lifesaver throughout the entire country.

Georgian Bay Volunteer Search and Rescue (GBVSR) supports Project Lifesaver, but has not joined because of the cost, said co-ordinator Darren Buck.

"For a volunteer team, it puts a real burden on us," he said, adding they have to sell cookies just to pay for their insurance.

GBVSR is a nonprofit organization providing support to police in the form of equipment and trained search and rescue personnel.

When it comes to protecting Simcoe County residents with dementia, most local police detachments have taken steps with vulnerable citizens' registries.

Participants provide police with their name, birth date, physical descriptors, contact information, and special needs, along with any other details that could prove helpful during a crisis. Including an updated photograph.

Orillia OPP's media and community safety officer, Const. Martin Hill said the registry gives police a head start in the search for your loved one.

"A lot of times we just don't get that information in time. The faster we get it, the better it is for everyone," he said.



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WELLNESS

Barrie Olive Oil Co. supports Project Lifesaver

SARA CARSON
 scarson@simcoe.com

Project Lifesaver has tugged at the heartstrings of at least one Barrie business owner. Denise Tucker, of Barrie Olive Oil Co., is among one of the first businesses to announce support for the technology used to track vulnerable residents when they go missing.

"Being a local business is not just about setting up locally, and hiring local people, and buying local ingredients. It's about supporting local initiatives and getting involved where you can because you have the time, and the strength, and the power, and the influence to do so," she said.

And for Tucker, this fundraising initiative hits home. Her 82-year-old mother has early onset dementia and aphasia, which means she has lost her communication skills.

"I have found her out on the driveway after being out for two minutes confused about why she's there," Tucker said.

She added: "I can see how someone can just wander off and I wouldn't have any recourse to find her."

And because of the aphasia, her mother wouldn't be able to communicate that she is lost and confused.

Barrie Olive Oil Co. will donate to the cam-



Sara Carson/Metroland

Denise Tucker, owner of Barrie Olive Oil Co., has thrown her support behind Project Lifesaver. The Barrie Chamber Of Commerce and Simcoe.com have pledged to raise \$25,000 to bring the tracking technology to our area.

paign and Tucker plans to enrol her mom in the Project Lifesaver program.

Project Lifesaver is a tool used by police and search-and-rescue teams to track vulnerable people when they go missing. Barrie Chamber of Commerce and Simcoe.com have pledged to raise \$25,000 to bring the technology to our area. All donations are welcome and the chamber has created four sponsorship levels.

On June 12, the Project Lifesaver Simcoe team met with Liz Kent who is leading the program in Wellington and Guelph.

Those communities have used the tool since 2011. In that time, they have conducted 11 Project Lifesaver searches. And all clients were located in 26 minutes, or less, said Kent, executive director of Victim Services Wellington.

"The peace of mind it gives caregivers and family members is phenomenal. It's that one extra tool to help to make sure that they're safe," Kent said.

She supports expanding the program because it will benefit her own Project Lifesaver clients who visit our area.

She fell in love with a conman determined to destroy her.

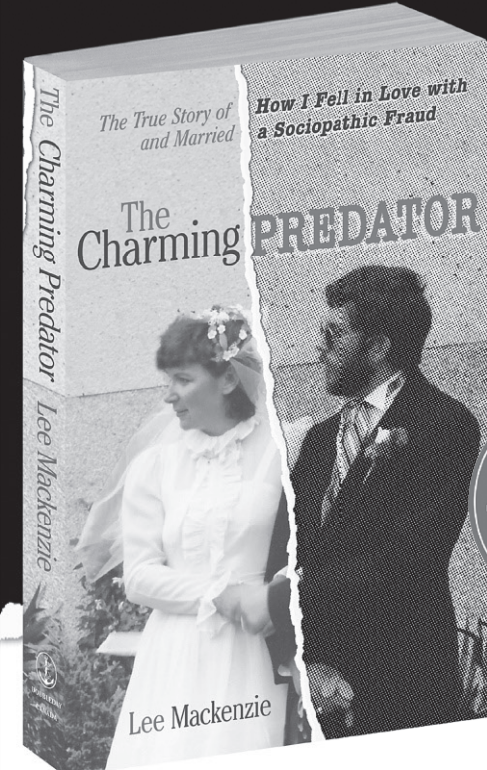
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Mandy Thompson's son is still searching

SARA CARSON

scarson@simcoe.com

Everywhere he goes, Paul Thompson is searching. His mom, Mandy, 72, went missing from the Barrie area on a cold February morning nearly five months ago and Thompson still looks for her every day.

"To this day as soon as I get in my vehicle: you're looking in the ditches, you're looking in the fields. Every day," he said.

The day started out like any other. At 8:30 a.m., Mandy came downstairs and entered the kitchen. Her husband was making breakfast and told her it would be ready in 15 minutes.

She left the kitchen and he heard the front door open. Mandy had gone outside and started walking.

"He knew right away because she had left the

house on other occasions," Thompson said.

On the February morning, Mandy was not dressed for the minus 22-Celsius weather. She was wearing light tennis shoes, jeans, and a knitted spring sweater.

Her husband is 82 and has a bad back. He tried to follow her, but she was much faster.

"She is a walker. Can she ever go," Thompson said.

He called the police and they arrived and started their initial search.

Thompson was called and arrived at 10:30 a.m. He started to look through the subdivision.

But, camera footage found days later, shows that by this time Mandy had already reached Robinson Home Hardware on Penetanguishene Road.

Mandy was last seen at Georgian Drive and Penetanguishene Road. Barrie Police, OPP, and Georgian



Sara Carson/Metroland

Paul Thompson's mom, Mandy, went missing from her Barrie home in February. He supports bringing Project Lifesaver tracking technology to this area.

Bay Volunteer Search and Rescue thoroughly combed the area for a week. And when the snow melted,

they searched again.

"All those resources and we couldn't find her. She is still missing to this day,"

Thompson said.

He added: "It's tough on the family. It's the not knowing."

Thompson told his story at a Project Lifesaver team meeting Monday, June 26 at the Barrie Chamber of Commerce. He supports bringing Project Lifesaver vulnerable persons tracking technology to this area.

"If she had of had the bracelet maybe she would have been found. Maybe not, but it sure would have helped out," Thompson said.

Ontario's seniors affairs minister Dipika Damerla sat in on the Project Lifesaver meeting. She was in Barrie making an announcement about the creation of a provincial Age-Friendly Community Recognition program.

Kris Hughston, Barrie Chamber of Commerce president, told Damerla that Project Lifesaver

should be provincially funded throughout Ontario.

"If you're truly trying to help the aging community, this is of utmost importance, that we don't lose another senior citizen in Canada," she said.

Damerla expressed sympathy for Thompson and his family. She did not commit to help fund the project.

The Barrie Chamber of Commerce and Simcoe.com have pledged to raise \$25,000 to bring Project Lifesaver to this area.

Donations can be dropped off at the Barrie Chamber of Commerce office at 121 Commerce Park Dr. A. Please make cheques out to Georgian Bay Volunteer Search and Rescue and you will be issued a charitable tax receipt.

For more information contact the Barrie Chamber of Commerce at 705-721-5000.

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COMMUNITY



Chris Simon/Metroland

Innisfil's Pat Dowdell was handed the keys to a Ford Escape by Delta Bingo and Gaming regional manager Tom Aikins July 28. Delta gave away 12 vehicles as part of its 50th anniversary celebration.

Delta Bingo hands SUV to Sandy Cove woman

CHRIS SIMON
chris.simon@simcoe.com

Pat Dowdell is turning a big personal win into community success.

Last month, the Sandy Cove resident's ballot was drawn in a contest for a new Ford Escape. The promotion was part of Delta Bingo and Gaming's 50th anniversary celebration.

Delta, which took over the former Boardwalk Gaming Centre on Bayfield Street in Barrie last year, handed out a total of 12 vehicles at its facilities.

"It's one in a million; you don't think it's going to happen to you and when it does you're shocked," Dowdell said, after being handed the keys to the vehicle and a bouquet of flowers at a ceremony at the downtown Barrie gaming centre July 28, the blue paint and

windows on the SUV sparkling in the sun. "I was just here like anyone else, put my ballot in and they drew my name. I'm lucky if I had five ballots in the box."

Dowdell often volunteers in the community and tries to help neighbours whenever possible. So perhaps it's little surprise that the first stop planned for the vehicle was her neighbour's home. Dowdell agreed to take the woman to a medical appointment.

"I'm going to pick up a friend who had a fall, to take her to get assessed for a walker at the hospital," she said. "She needs help. I'm always out helping others."

As part of the anniversary celebration, Delta is also hosting its biggest jackpot ever, with over \$500,000 scheduled to be won.

"What better way to celebrate 50 years of bingo than hosting our biggest jackpot ever and giving away new vehicles?" Delta CEO Cam Johnstone said.


Delta regional manager Tom Aikins said Dowdell was overwhelmed when her name was pulled.

"Pat's name was the first one drawn and her screams were all the proof we needed that she was present," he said. "Pat told us that she has gone without a car for the past year while she renovates her home. Those work boots aren't made for walking any more."

Delta operates 18 locations across North America, including sites in Downsview, Niagara Falls, Brampton, Fort Erie, Mississauga, Penetanguishene, Pickering and Sudbury. For more information, visit deltabingo.com.

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COMMUNITY

Project Lifesaver gets \$1,500 boost from Colts game

SARA CARSON
scarson@simcoe.com

Project Lifesaver Simcoe is \$1,500 closer to its goal thanks to funds raised through a Barrie Colts game held Sept. 14.

Project Lifesaver is a Barrie Chamber and Simcoe.com initiative intended to help protect vulnerable people in our community who have a tendency to wander. The program uses receivers and transmitter bracelets that can be used to locate a person.

Supporters sang O Canada to kick off the Colts match against the Niagara Ice Dogs.

And Georgian Bay Volunteer Search and Rescue and Barrie police manned a Project Lifesaver booth during the event to educate the public on the cause.



Sara Carson/Metroland

Const. Pete Moore, with the Barrie Police tactical unit, at a Barrie Colts game Sept. 14 in support of Project Lifesaver. The game raised \$1,500 for the project.

Project Lifesaver Simcoe is raising \$25,000 to purchase the equipment,

with plans to launch a pilot project in Barrie/Innisfil in the fall of 2017.

EDUCATION

College faculty hand bargaining team strike mandate

FRANK MATYS
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The team bargaining on behalf of Ontario's college faculty has secured a strike mandate from 68 per cent of its members.

"College faculty from across the province debated and voted on 16 proposals to improve the quality and fairness of the college system in Ontario," said bargaining team chair J.P. Hornick, of the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union. "Since bargaining started 10 weeks ago, management has ignored every single one of them."

The collective agreement for 12,000 professors, instructors, counsellors and librarians expires Sept. 30.

No strike or lockout deadline has been set.

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Sonia Del Missier, representing the team bargaining on behalf of Ontario's colleges, said she remains committed to reaching a negotiated settlement after a majority of college faculty gave their union a strike mandate.

ulty in academic decision-making are among the issues the union wants addressed.

Sonia Del Missier, of the provincial bargaining team, said her side remains committed to reaching a negotiated settlement.

However, "there are fundamental challenges with the governance changes that they are proposing - the academic control, the staffing ratios," she said. "Those are all proposals that really don't form the basis for a settlement."

Bargaining resumed this week.

College faculty represented by the union include those at Georgian College, which has campuses in Barrie, Orillia, Midland, Collingwood, Bracebridge, Owen Sound, and Orangeville,

for full- and partial-load faculty, and the role of fac-