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Examiner.

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THURSDAY
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FLOOD!

Craftsman Konstantin Botsiev photo

Canadian Armed Forces Reservists arrive in Bracebridge to join the huge number of organizations and volunteers helping flood victims.

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WHAT IT'S LIKE TO FLEE A FLOOD

AS A TIER 2 RESPONDER, TOURNOUR IS PLEASED MAYOR DECLARED EMERGENCY

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BRACEBRIDGE - Jennifer Tournour packed up her belongings, bade farewell to her husband, escorted her dog to safety and left her Harmony Lane home heading for the evacuation centre in Bracebridge.

An evacuee herself, Tournour has friends to turn to but she was going to the centre that was set up in Bracebridge yesterday, April 24, to help others in similar situations as emergency responders headed door to door in flooded neighbourhoods advising evacuation.

Tournour is a tier 2 responder with the Salvation Army.

Over Easter weekend, she watched as water levels began to rise.

"It's shocking. Scary," she said.

She had been watching the weather knowing Tuesday's rain was going to be bad, but also fearing sunny and hot temperatures and the melt from the north that could continue to make water levels rise. She predicted the water would be in the garage overnight but the water had not yet reached the inside of their house, which stands on piers.

The couple have owned their home for nearly three

years and knew the backside and swampy marshy area would flood and the laneway would get wet but something like this is much different.

"In terms of the marshy stuff flooding and some inconvenience for a week with a wet laneway, the benefit is living on the river and the beautiful part of that for the summer and the fall," she said. "But we were told the river does not come up. It came up in 2013, but prior to that it was 100 years ago."

Their house is now an island with the river's current flowing at the front steps, where the lawn used to be.

"When you hear that the water's going to rise for a few days ..." she trails off, concerned for her husband Vince who remains in the house and their furnace, water pump and septic.

It was Wednesday afternoon when she left. She went home knowing getting their lab Boo across the water would be complicated if the water continued to rise. The laneway was already crotch-deep. She moved boxes around in the garage, elevating them out of what she hopes is harm's way. A representative from the hydro dropped in to tell her power would be cut to their home within 24 hours. Then the first responders came.



Jennifer Tournour photos

"They said they were recommending evacuation at that point," she said.

She was nervous for Boo as she left. She contemplated trying to manoeuvre him across the water in the canoe and bringing it back for her husband, but instead decided to let Boo swim.

"I recognized how cold it was and I'm thinking, 'Oh, this is a bad idea,'" she said. She thought about going back for the canoe but by that time they had reached the halfway point so decided to forge ahead as quickly as she could. There was respite as they moved from lawn to lawn.

"He was just as happy as could be," she said. Her worry over Boo was all for naught.

The day prior to leaving her home, on Tuesday, April 23, Mayor Graydon Smith called a state of emergency for flooding. For this, Tournour is pleased.

"As a tier 2 responder I recognize this is a good thing. By calling a state of emergency that activates the emergency plan and funding from the province. It's good when they're



Mary Beth Hartill/Metroland

clockwise from top left: The home of Jennifer and Vince Tournour is one of many Bracebridge properties impacted by flooding; A canoe is strapped to a porch on Harmony Lane in Bracebridge to ensure residents can navigate their flooded road; Jennifer Tournour and neighbour Mike Demarais don their hip waders to cope with flooding.

called because it provides extra supports and resources," she said. "There has to be a declaration otherwise it's just a bunch of random things happening."

According to Smith dur-

ing a media scrum on April 25, the evacuation centre at Memorial Arena was open yesterday as first responders went door to door. Only one person, a woman in a similar situation to Tournour with a husband still

at home, needed accommodation.

Being both an evacuee and a responder is bound to be hectic for Tournour, and with the anticipated heavy rain, it threatens to be even more so.

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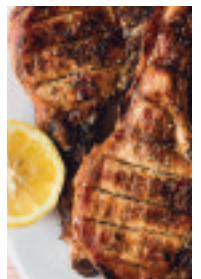
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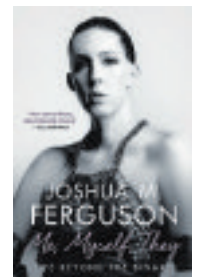
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Mary Beth Hartill/Torstar

Shirley Bendell catches a ride with members of the Emergency Response Team Search and Rescue over badly flooded Fraserburg Road.

BRACEBRIDGE WOMAN CARRIED ACROSS FLOODED FRASERBURG ROAD

MARY BETH HARTILL
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BRACEBRIDGE - For Shirley Bendell, heading out for groceries on Friday, May 3, was an adventure.

Bendell, 81, lives at the end of Sherwood Forest Road with her

husband Bill. It is one of many roads closed due to flooding so severe it prompted the mayor to declare a state of emergency and appeal for military assistance.

The elevation shielded the home from the high waters of the south branch of the Muskoka River, but the only way in or out via Sherwood Forest Road to Fraser-

burg Road - also flooded. The intersection was closed April 27. The river was crossing the road with such fury, the current could be seen from a distance by the naked eye.

This is where Bendell's shopping adventure began.

Members of Emergency Response Team Search and Rescue

helped her don a helmet and life-jacket and get into a raft. Six men, three on either side, transported her through the water - floating where the water was deep and carrying her through the shallows.

This is a disaster response

See SHOPPING, page 22

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