

TALK IT UP

VICTORIA

The Renfrew Victoria Hospital newsletter

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Burnstown artist creates custom piece for a “terrific” hospital

A local clay-relief sculptor’s work is no stranger to the halls of Renfrew Victoria Hospital. His stunning wall plaques are a feature of the bricked walls near the emergency room entrance, and a large replica of the façade of the hospital was unveiled in 2007 as a dedication to the 60-plus years of contributions made by the RVH auxiliary.

When asked to design a piece of artwork to grace the front of this year’s Christmas card, Richard Gill says he didn’t have to put much thought into the concept.

“Why look for something when the obvious is staring me in the face?” he comments.

His rendering of the actual Tree of Lights towering over Renfrew’s Town Hall in Low Square measures about 12 by 15 inches. All of Gill’s work is masterfully sculpted in stoneware clay, coloured with underglazes and fired to 2200 degrees Fahrenheit.

The Burnstown artist says he rarely titles pieces, however, since this was created with a special cause in mind, he decided this one should appropriately be named Tree of Health, “because that’s what it represents, right?”

Gill is pleased to support the hospital in this manner and has nothing but praise for RVH, its top-notch staff and the wealth of services available in a small-town setting.

“I think we’re astoundingly lucky in this community,” he says, adding that the wide range of professional health care services available is a “big draw” for the area.

“If I can contribute in a small way, such as this, I am more than happy to do so.”

Gill has a Bachelor of Architecture from Pennsylvania State University and an Applied Arts Diploma in Ceramics from Sheridan College. The talented artist works out of his picturesque Fog Run Studio, along Leckie Lane in the village of Burnstown, where he has lived for the past 38 years.

He is an award-winning artist with his carefully crafted wall plaques being featured in numerous private and public collections around the world. His commissioned murals hang in many office buildings, hospitals and museums across Canada, including the National

Museum of Man, the Canadian Museum of Civilization, and the Ontario Provincial Archives.

The texture, dimension, understated colours and timeless appeal of Gill’s craftsmanship make the generosity of this local artist a true holiday gift to RVH.

As the feature artist, he also gets to choose where funds from this year’s campaign will be directed.

“It’s such a terrific hospital, but I picked a place that I’ve had the most contact with,” he explains. In a tribute to the members of his family who have been touched by cancer, the area closest to Gill’s heart is the oncology department.



Artist Richard Gill with some of his creations in his Burnstown studio.

Tree of Lights equipment makes a difference

John Lacharity has the distinction of being RVH's very first CT scan patient last October and he is very grateful to the community for its overwhelming support in bringing this service to our town—his back yard, in fact.

The RVH Foundation was able to contribute approximately \$206,000 on behalf of the 2008 and 2009 Tree of Lights campaigns to the addition of the 64-slice scan unit.

Lacharity, a Grigg Avenue resident, also undergoes dialysis treatment three times a week and makes regular visits to the x-ray department and wound care clinics.

"I'm very pleased with all of the services," comments Lacharity.

"I don't get around too well, so it's really handy to have it all right there," he adds.

He has since walked over for a second CT scan of his kidneys.

Many of these extended services wouldn't be possible without the contributions made to the Tree of Lights campaign each year.

At the request of card artist Richard Gill, funds will be funnelled to the oncology department this year.

For a 12-year-old oncology patient and her family, they know the funds will be an extension of the already fabulous service available to cancer patients.

As a parent, Donna Barr can't explain the frightening, heartbroken feelings of that first diagnosis of cancer.

In those early days, the Barr family was comforted by the terrific health care staff who put them at ease and took wonderful care of their daughter Jill.

"We have been so blessed to be surrounded by great friends, family and medical professionals while we work at getting Jill healthy again," she comments.

She pays special tribute to the nurses who work efficiently and always with a cheerful attitude.

"Thanks so much for taking great care of me and keeping me feeling well when I got my blood taken," says Jill to the team in the oncology unit.

Jill also gets to wear a beautiful symbol of the warmth and care she received at RVH in the form of her knit hat. Donna says it's been the key in making Jill feel stylish and not self-conscious.

The Barrs know how lucky they are to encounter such a high level of professionalism in their small community. They will always be proud and grateful to say "we can get that done in Renfrew."

More than \$1 million has been donated to RVH over the last 19 years through the generous contributions made during the annual Tree of Lights campaigns.

Each year, the RVH Foundation directs these funds to a specific area of the hospital to either purchase new equipment or greatly enhance funding for larger projects, all in the name of improved care for patients.

Over the years, the CT scan unit upgrades and the diagnostic imaging and emergency room/ambulatory care wing expansions in the early 2000s have benefitted from the thousands of dollars raised.

Other items that have been made possible through Tree of Lights donations have been:

- monitoring equipment for the Special Care Unit
- an electrocardiograph machine
- a new operating table and electric beds in the active care department on the second floor
- new monitoring equipment and furnishings in the obstetrics unit
- cancer screening equipment in the form of a sentinel node biopsy system
- capital equipment for a portable x-ray unit.

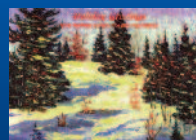


John Lacharity making the very first trip into RVH's CT scanner.

The Tree of Lights card has taken many different artistic forms over the years, thanks to the creative talent of our community. It has become a collector item for many recipients.



Leslie Cross
1994



Bill Child
1995



Josephine Prentice
1996



Diana Wakely
1997

A holiday tradition

Nothing says “let’s start the holiday season” better than a crisp, cool evening, festive music sung by local children and the main event—the official lighting of a giant Christmas tree in the heart of downtown.

After all, it has been a tradition since 1991 to gather in Low Square during the dinner hour on an early December evening to celebrate the magic of Christmas and a frosty kick-off of the Tree of Lights campaign.

“What better way is there?” asks Jim Lemenchick, president of the RVH Foundation, of the coming together of the community in a show of support of their hospital.

Even the years when the thermometer dips to extremely brisk temperatures, people still come out bundled in parkas, winter boots, warm woollen mittens and scarves to enjoy some yuletide

cheer with neighbours. There is always plenty of hot chocolate to go around too, thanks to the many volunteers contributing to the program.

“Regardless of the weather, everyone is always happy to come out and see that big tree get plugged in,” Lemenchick notes.

It may be a big tree now, but in the early years of the campaign and Tree of Lights event, RVH used to transport in a tree especially for the lighting ceremony.

After seeing the continual success of the annual campaign and the event itself, a special evergreen was donated and planted by the Renfrew Fire Department.

“It was just a little tree when we first got it,” says past Foundation director and founder of the Tree of Lights event Barbara Symington. “It has just grown by leaps and bounds.”

Usually there are in excess of 1,500 lights twinkling on the tree when the big switch gets flipped, says Bob McParland, a member of RVH’s maintenance team. They are responsible for the stringing of lights and ensuring the night goes on without a glitch.

“Two years ago we switched from incandescent lights to the LED bulbs,” McParland notes. With the help of many ladders and a bucket rental to reach the highest branches, the men spend a couple days on Raglan Street to get the tree prepared for the big day.

Each light represents a donation made during the campaign, with a strand of white lights along the bottom as a symbol of the pledges made in memory of a loved one.

“Our goal the first year was to make \$10,000 for the hospital,” remembers Symington of the 1991 total. “But we raised \$12,500.”

And that outpouring of support set a pattern for the years that followed.

Last year’s record-setting campaign brought in more than \$100,000, which is a “phenomenal amount,” Symington says.



Bill Hammerich
1998



Dwyene MacNabb
1999



Sheila Fletcher
2000



Diana Wakely
2001



Armond Emond
2002



Dorothy Cook
2003

Lemenchick continues to be in awe of the overwhelming support for RVH through this one annual direct mailout effort.

“It’s very well received in the community,” he says.

“It’s really the only formal fundraising we do all year. And it’s the only time we go directly to the community to look for their support.”

He believes its success is directly related to how well-respected the hospital is by the residents of Renfrew and surrounding areas.

“People see its importance and are always willing to help.”

No doubt many people are also anxious to see what fresh piece of artwork will be featured on the card’s cover.

“I think a lot of people just wait for the card,” Lemenchick figures, “and then use it as their opportunity to give to the hospital.”

The Christmas card also serves as their invitation to the event, which will take place this year on Friday, December 3,

beginning at 6 p.m. Everyone is welcome to come out to see the lighting of the tree, listen to the children’s choir and kick off the downtown’s Christmas celebrations.

Since Santa has such a busy schedule during the weeks leading up to Christmas, his favourite “helper,” Klaus Arp, always makes an appearance as the Jolly Ol’ Elf and assists in the countdown to light the tree.



A continuous circle of caring



In 2008, a circle of white lights at the base of the tree was introduced to represent a continuous circle of caring. Bulbs are lit to remember those who chose to give to the hospital in remembrance of their loved ones. Our hope is that this helps to warm the hearts of family and friends with special memories.

Remembrance, like a candle, burns brighter at Christmas time.
—Charles Dickens



Walter Von Boetticher
2004



Ann Marie Crozier
2005



Kim Carnegie
2006



J. Beattie
Kalimeris
2007



Betty Flower
2008



Dianne Risto
2009

A card of thanks to our auxiliary and volunteers



The real holiday elves of RVH happen to be a dedicated group of volunteers who do much of the leg work behind the scenes of the hospital to generate funds, all year round.

Led by the RVH Auxiliary, the team includes staff volunteers and others from the community who pitch in to create our Christmas magic.

As the festive season sets in, members of the RVH Auxiliary get into the spirit by assisting with the mail-out of the Christmas cards.

The team of steadfast envelope stuffers are always quick to answer the call, says RVH Auxiliary President Fran Bonner.

She says it's always a fun day—or sometimes two—for the ladies, who celebrated their 65th anniversary this past June.

“We call it a card stuffing party,” jokes Pat Blandford, former auxiliary president, who has assisted with the task for the past six years.

Although the tradition of the Tree of Lights campaign began in 1991, the cards were introduced three years later to provide a unique local touch.

Envelopes are all pre-addressed by one auxiliary member prior to the card stuffing party day. When the cards are ready, about a dozen or so ladies set up an assembly line to ensure that a card goes in each one, they are stamped and all set to mail out.

Part of the fun for the women is to have a sneak peak at the seasonal illustrations by local artists that adorn the front of the cards.

The Foundation is expecting to send out approximately 1,500 cards featuring the work of Burnstown artist Richard Gill as part of this year's campaign. Last year's record-setting

donations totalled more than \$100,000 from the Tree of Lights campaign and they're hoping to top that this year.

When the tree in Low Square lights up this year, RVH oncology nurse volunteers will be on hand serving up delicious hot chocolate to event attendees. Others have made contributions behind the scenes to make this annual event an ongoing success.

“They are the cornerstone of this event,” RVH Foundation Director Barb Desilets comments.

Current hospital supporters can look forward to the 2010 Tree of Lights Christmas card in their mailbox, including all of the campaign details. To be added to the mailing list, or for more information, contact the Foundation office at 613-432-4851 ext. 263.



Last fall, some of the local artists who have had their artwork featured on the RVH Tree of Lights Christmas card gathered for a special tribute at last year's art selection event. Back row from left, Sheila Fletcher (2000), Leslie Cross (1994), Dwyene MacNabb (1999), Walter Von Boetticher (2004), Diana Wakely (1997 & 2001), and Ann Marie Crozier (2005), and front, Betty Flower (2008), Dorothy Cook, (2003), and Josephine Prentice (1996). Missing from the photo are Kim Carnegie (2006), J. Beattie Kalimeris (2007) and Dianne Risto (2009). Three of the artists have passed away: Bill Child (1995), Bill Hammerich (1998) and Armond Emond (2002).

Think outside the box!

As we advance toward the festive social season, we invite you to take a cue from the RVH Auxiliary's original idea and "think outside the box".

For those challenging gifts you need to buy, instead of a hostess gift or as a Christmas token, please consider making a donation to the RVH Tree of Lights campaign to honour the recipient.

It's a gift that will benefit our entire community, and help us deliver quality health care to the people of Renfrew.

Thank you for making us confident enough to "think outside the box" as we continue to expand the health services we provide!

For information, please call the RVH Foundation office at 613-432-4851, ext. 263.



Above, RVH Foundation Director Barb Desilets is pictured with Alec, Mykenzie and Camryn McCallum. They made a Tree of Lights donation in honour of their teachers in 2008.



Renfrew Home Hardware officially unveiled Christmas on October 19, 2010. Proceeds of ticket sales from the event, totaling more than \$2,000.00, were directed to the Mammography Unit at RVH.



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The Renfrew
Victoria
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Foundation

Make RVH your charity of choice. Please call the RVH Foundation office at 613-432-4851 ext. 263, or visit us online at www.rvhfoundation.com to learn more about how you can contribute to the RVH difference.