

## The *community* says good-bye to a unique ambassador

**O**n October 22, Cathy Kerr died after a fight with cancer. She was known to so many people in the community as a passionate and committed advocate for people with disABILITIES. Her contribution to The Rehabilitation Centre was remarkable; as a member of the Board of Directors, as Chair the Consumers Advisory Council for seven years, and as a key player in the Patient Dignity Task Force. In 1999, she was honoured with the TRC Achievement Award in recognition for her outstanding personal and community contributions and achievements.

Cathy's career was amazing: she was the youngest Canadian to have worked in the Prime Minister's office (in the 1970's) and she was particularly proud of her work as the Director of Operations Co-ordination for the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary. Her community involvement started when she was in her teens, continued her entire adult life where, through many causes, she contributed to and advocated



**Cathy Kerr**  
1951-2004

for inclusion and accessibility in the community. She helped co-found the Shouthenders Kiwanis Club, was a member of numerous community boards, task forces and committees. Most recently she was instrumental in organizing Wheelchair Curling in Ottawa. She was recognized, thanked and honoured with numerous awards including the United Way Community Builder Award in 2001 and the City of Ottawa Civic Appreciation Award in 2004.

Cathy was a powerful presenter, coach and mentor within the DisABILITIES Awareness Program at The Rehabilitation Centre. One of her favourite quotes were the words from Helen Keller: "I am only one, but still I am one... I cannot do everything, but still I can do something... and I must do the something that I can do."

Cathy's friends and colleagues with the DisABILITIES Awareness Program and at The Rehabilitation Centre thank her, remember her and honour her for the gift of her passion, vision and commitment.

We are pleased to include in this issue (on pages 2 and 3) tributes to Cathy from different members of the community.

*Timothy Andrade*

## Beat the Bug Get the *Flu* Shot

by Rochelle Fowler

**I**t's that time of year again to roll up our sleeves and get the shot that will protect our families and ourselves. This year is expected to be a busy flu season as there are already confirmed cases of the flu in Ontario. Every year, five million Canadians are infected with the virus and 4,500 will die due to influenza.

The vaccine provides protection to 70% of those vaccinated and reduces the severity of illness compared to those unvaccinated that become ill. The flu vaccine will protect you from the flu viruses about two weeks after receiving the vaccine and will protect you throughout the flu season. Please note: this is not a live vaccine - there is NO chance of getting even a mild case of the flu from the vaccine.

Your Occupational Health and Safety Services will be providing Staff Flu Vaccine Clinics again this year from November 1-December 3 for all staff, physicians, students and volunteers. The calendar is be posted at the following locations:

- ▷ Public Folders/OHSS/Flu Campaign
- ▷ Employee Corner
- ▷ InfoNet
- ▷ All OHSS offices

We will continue again this year, with RNs vaccinating their co-workers, since this was very successful last year. Remember, if you get your shot from a clinic outside of the hospital, you are required to provide documentation to OHSS for tracking purposes in the event of an outbreak.

Let's be proactive this year: beat the bug, roll up our sleeves and get the flu shot!

Cathy Kerr was a hero in the truest sense of the word.

As a committed advocate, Cathy was always thinking about the welfare of others and never missed an opportunity to educate the public, the politicians, and indeed, some medical practitioners about the rights and requirements of people with disabilities and the importance of available, comprehensive rehabilitation services.

I have learned a lot from Cathy, both personally and professionally, in the short time that I was privileged to know her. I will miss her wit, her intelligence, her passion, and her friendship. Because of her dedication and determination her legacy will carry on.

*Cathy Danbrook, CEO, TRC*

Cathy Kerr: a passionate and articulate advocate and ambassador for inclusion, accessibility, the field and practice of client-centred rehabilitation. One of the messages she consistently repeated: "If we value lives enough to spend 100's of millions of dollars in prevention and treatment in an effort to save lives, then let's finish the investment by giving people the opportunity with supports and programs and resources to live those lives we saved.

A real champion with real wisdom! We were so fortunate to have her as part of the team! Now it falls to others to carry the torch and continue the journey.

*Timothy Andradé, disABILITIES Awareness Program Coordinator, TRC*

Cathy was a very compassionate, inspiring person who never forgot the quality of friendship and her friends. I had the privilege of working with her on the ROHCG Board, the TRC Board of Directors, the DPCR Board of Directors and the team who selected the TRC Achievement Award recipients for the past few years. To all of those activities, Cathy brought passion and insight that allowed each segment of the community in which she was working to reach higher goals and aspiration that we had originally sought for ourselves.

*Joan Black, Friend*

Cathy was my friend and mentor, starting with the TRC Advisory Committee, and later the Coalition for persons with disabilities. In my work over the years advancing accessibility in our community and dealing with political issues, I would call of Cathy for advice or direction. Cathy would always answer her phone with a very positive attitude, and at the end of the conversation, I would feel much more confident and good about myself. Cathy would say to me: "call me anytime my friend, my door is always open". Cathy's favourite expression for me was "my friend"... sometimes she would refer to me as Jeff, but most of the time it was "my friend".

Cathy provided me with much support with my work at City Hall, and became a strong advocate within the disability community. Cathy has worked and supported many people in our community achieve quality of life.

I will miss those evening telephone calls we use to have, and I will miss her spirit and leadership in our community. Most of all, I will miss Cathy saying to me: "anytime my friend".

*Jeff Willbond, Friend*

*She touched  
so many...  
We remember*

Cathy was one of those rare individuals who could remain optimistic in the most difficult of circumstances. She was kind, considerate and cared deeply about others. Recently I met her at the hospital. We chatted, but not so much about her, but about how I was doing and encouraged me in my then upcoming surgery. She was a great lady! May she rest in peace.

*Ted Finn, Past Chair, TRC Board of Directors*

Cathy Kerr was without a doubt "One of a Kind". For the short time that I have known Cathy she certainly has made a huge impact on my life and many, many others that she may have associated with. She had an extra ordinary special ways to deal with and communicate with people. In actual fact whether one agreed or disagreed with her, Cathy had that special way about her to make everyone smile at the end of the day.

It was indeed an honour to be on the original executive of the "Capital Wheelchair Curling" with her, she was such a dynamic leader. Her vast knowledge in curling and leadership skills still amaze the rest of us today. Cathy's expertise in curling and being "Skip" I am sure will always be embedded in our minds as fond memories, especially for her competitive team.

*Fondly remembered By Donny and Mary Stinson.  
"Do Your Best, That's All That's Expected."*

Cathy Kerr saw the world for what it was, compared it to what she believed it should be and worked tirelessly to bring the two together. She was driven by her vision of a community in which people with disabilities have the same choices and are able to exercise the same rights and responsibilities as all other Canadians.

Cathy joined DPCR's Board of Directors in 2000 providing leadership, different perspectives, fresh ideas, new approaches and most importantly support and encouragement.

She made a tremendous contribution to the community and DPCR through her participation on our Board of Directors, her work with the Advocacy, Research and Development Committee and her preparation and presentation of briefing documents on a wide range of issues. In 2002 Cathy was recognized by her peers as DPCR's Volunteer of the Year.

Since her death each day brings with it memories and a greater and deeper understanding of who she was and what she has meant to us. Her richest legacy to us and to everyone who knew her is the memory of her that we carry in our hearts.

*Teena Tomlinson, Executive Director, DPCR*

I first began working with Cathy Kerr when community members came together to respond to the 2001 ParaTranspo strike, with the founding of the People with Disabilities Coalition. Cathy became the coalition's Chair and was and continued to be, a force to be reckoned with. Cathy was an amazing person to work with, and I learned a great deal from her. While she was articulate, passionate and absolutely brilliant, she was never self-serving. I will miss her.

*Dennise Taylor-Gilhen,  
Director, Partnerships and Initiatives, United Way*

Cathy so ably demonstrated the meaning of good citizenship. She was a great friend to people with disabilities. As a person with an acquired physical disability, Cathy was able to transcend the boundaries of her disability, develop a great appreciation for both the capacities and gifts of people with other types of disabilities as well as the challenges and barriers they faced in life. Among the many examples of this was her significant contribution to the development of the community's annual Celebration of People event and awards dinner to recognize the capacities of people with disabilities within the context of the International Day of Disabled Persons.

*Brian Tardiff,  
Executive Director,  
Citizen Advocacy*

Cathy's life was like a lighthouse beacon. She guided us through the sometimes very deep and rocky waters where we could always find a safe and comforting haven, a place where we all could live or lives as we should with deep respect for one another's existence. She wanted to make sure that we were all a part of society where everyone has the right to be treated equally. The depth of her commitment to the disabled community was unrelenting and unsurpassed. Her legacy of hope and justice for all will live on in the memory of her voice and the warmth of her smile. Her light will continue to shine and guide us forever.

*Paddy M. Cedar,  
Chair, TRC Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, Member of the TRC Board*

Cathy was a good friend to me. She was a strong, independent, intelligent, quick-witted woman but to me, most of all, she was a friend. Many people talk about her accomplishment, the awards she received and the steps she made to support people with disabilities but this was only one side of Cathy. I have been hearing so many stories about Cathy in the past few days and I am amazed at how many people she really did reach out to. One woman told me yesterday that while she was sitting outside the Rehab waiting for ParaTranspo she and Cathy started talking. They had never met before. In that short 20 to 30 minute conversation, Cathy left an impression on this woman that she will never forget. After ending the conversation the woman got on the bus and she said she felt so alive, and so important. Somehow, in that short period of time Cathy had left a life long impression on this woman. She will never forget that conversation with Cathy. This is how Cathy did things. It almost seems like one of Cathy's personal goals in life was to make everyone feel great about themselves. She never asked or expected anything in return; her reward was the achievements of others.

I have tried to explain who Cathy was to so many people who did not have the pleasure or the opportunity to meet her and it is one of the most difficult things to do. It is so hard to put into words how dynamic and how very special Cathy truly was to each of us. I have known Cathy for over five years and I have to say that was not long enough and I only wish more people could have had the opportunity to meet and experience this wonderful, kind-hearted woman.

Cathy worked selflessly in the community at all different levels, she achieved great things and she will always live on through the many people she knew and met over the years. She will be missed.

*Katie Paialunga, Executive Director, Ottawa-Carleton ILC*

