



Marilyn MacDonald

(1954 -)

"I could tell you a million stories about people whose lives have changed because somebody volunteers." Marilyn MacDonald has been an involved volunteer as long as she can remember. Born in the small city of Summerside, Prince Edward Island, she fondly remembers a childhood filled with camping, beaches, friends and family as well as volunteering alongside her parents - packing Christmas hampers, visiting seniors in nursing homes and baking for fund-raisers. It was that upbringing and involvement in community that made her feel "at home" in the community of Mission. She sees it as a community where people come together and where she, husband Glen and her three children, Meagan, Kate and Adam could share their passion for the outdoors and the sense of community.

Marilyn left home after high school for Mount Allison University and then went on to a career in journalism. Always curious about the larger world, she took time out to hitch-hike around Europe and after another journalism job, she and three friends drove across Canada landing a reporting job in BC. A few years later, a job offer in Halifax took her back east where she likes to say she found a "Maritime husband." During the late 1970s and early 80s, it was exciting time for her as a political reporter covering the constitutional talks, the new Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the National Energy Program.. She criss-crossed Canada to gather and report on the pulse of the country. In 1982, Marilyn moved west when Glen landed a job as a city planner in Abbotsford. However, the 80s recession hit and Marilyn had a difficult time finding work as a journalist. However, working as a freelancer gave her time to volunteer as a tutor at Fraser Valley College with people with disabilities. It was like she had found a home. When an opportunity arose to assist in training tutors, Marilyn took it, beginning and her 26 year career at the University of the Fraser Valley.

She literally went from volunteer to a long and fulfilling career. She completed her Master's degree in Curriculum Development and Instruction and worked for UFV until 2012, when she retired. Having volunteered for many years in the schools her children attended in Mission, she expanded her volunteerism when she became manager of the Mission UFV campus. She has served on the boards of Mission Community Services, Mission Arts Council, Mission Literacy Association, Lifetime Learning, Mission Youth House (MY House) and as a Rotarian with the Mission Sunrise Club, serving as its President in 2012-13.

However, it is adult literacy which is closest to her heart. Much of her work at UFV was in the area of adult literacy. She was a long time president of the Mission Literacy Association where she continues to volunteer training volunteer tutors and has been honoured with a lifetime honorary membership. Marilyn also served on the board of Literacy BC (now Decoda), including a term as president.

Watching the change in a person's life when they become readers and writers is a thrill of which she never tires. Now in retirement, Marilyn is doing what she loves- volunteering, travelling and enjoying her community of Mission. When asked why she does it she stated, "It's my responsibility to give back to my community – but it's also my joy".

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