Janet Chalmers

(1951 -)

Janet Chalmers was born on April 13th, 1951, in Brooks, Alberta to parents Roy Chalmers and Lorna Scott. Janet was the second youngest of four siblings, with two older sisters and a younger brother.

Her family moved frequently as a child, living throughout Metro Vancouver, Victoria, New Zealand, and Australia. At age sixteen she left home to help her sister who had just had her second child in Kamloops. While there, she got a job working in medical administration, which she continued upon moving back to Vancouver and then to Gibsons, where she opened a daycare with a friend.

She later sold her share in the business and moved to Mission with her three children, Molly, Katie, and John in 1983. In Mission, she found work as a secretary for the Mission School Board, and over the course of her career, worked in every school in the district. While working as a secretary, she got involved with CUPE, acting as a secretary and a negotiator for the union (the latter of which she especially enjoyed). For Janet, “It wasn’t all about wages, it was all about rights.”

Janet has been a dedicated volunteer throughout her residency in Mission, starting with the Mission Environmental Society, where she is especially proud of implementing curbside recycling services and establishing the Soapbox Community Garden. She was also one of the original organizers of MissionFest, a long-running festival meant to give families a free, fun activity before returning to school in the fall.

As a Rotarian, she co-founded the Starfish Backpack Project in Mission in 2016 to feed hungry students, earning her and fellow Rotarian Elspeth Bowers a Special Accomplishment Award in 2024. Through this work she also became involved in the Mission Food Coalition to advance local food security and systems. Her passion for service also expanded globally as she helped raise funds for an Amarok Society school for women in Bangladesh. In 2025, Janet and her husband, Roger Dowker, were honoured as Citizens of the Year by the City of Mission.

In keeping with her environmental advocacy, in 2023, her and Roger travelled over 26,000 km across Canada in an electric car. She considers her family—including Erika, her oldest daughter who she reconnected with 53 years after her adoption, her five grandchildren, and a great-grandchild arriving this October—and Starfish to be among her biggest accomplishments. Guided by the principles of kindness, generosity, and caring for other people, she believes that “volunteering is the rent you pay for your place here on earth.”

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