Helen McElroy

(1952 -)

Helen Rose Thompson Stohrer Friess Scott McElroy was born June 3rd, 1952 in Campbell River. She was the oldest of three siblings, with a younger sister and brother. When she was very young, her father was lost at sea, and her mother relocated the family to Surrey. It was there that her mother met and married Kurt Stohrer, with whom Helen would grow very close.

In school, Helen excelled in both academics and sports, particularly enjoying the Leadership Program and cheerleading. While in grade 12, she became pregnant and married her boyfriend. Her daughter, Laurie, was born in the fall following graduation, but the marriage did not last. As a single parent, Helen supported herself and her daughter with a job in manufacturing, first as an office worker, but later in production thanks to her natural talent for math. It was in production that she met her current husband, Joseph “Joe” McElroy.

Helen and Joe moved to Mission in 1988. They immediately joined the South West Mission Ratepayers Association to campaign for the Silverdale firehall. Her sense of community also led to her joining the Silverdale Hall Association. When the firehall was built, she joined the Firehall #3 Women’s Auxiliary to support fellow firefighters’ wives. She also became involved in emergency services, studying at the Justice Institute and becoming Mission’s Emergency Support Services Director and a Red Cross disaster responder for fire and flood victims. Her dedication led her to travel British Columbia, teaching Justice Institute courses on wildfire readiness and disaster coordination. During this busy period, she also provided physical therapy for a disabled youth in the neighborhood, developing a strong supportive bond.

Following multiple cancer diagnoses in her family, Helen dedicated herself to fundraising for a cure. Her initiatives included walking one kilometre for every dollar donated, and later, collecting a pound of litter for every dollar. After reconnecting with her Indigenous heritage, she expanded her volunteer work to the Mission Friendship Centre, where she delivered meals during the COVID-19 pandemic, helped in the kitchen, and served on the board of directors. Additionally, Helen has shown her solidarity with the community by participating in several awareness walks for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2-Spirit People (MMIWG2S).

Helen is driven by a love for her community and her family, and her philosophy in life is to “be the difference.”

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