

Fund to assist women honours memory of local advocate

(STRATFORD, ON) October 14, 2008 – Family and friends of the late Judi Hemmingway have joined together to create a fund at the Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation they are sure would have pleased Judi. A life-long advocate on behalf of women and the issues they face, Judi worked on the front lines and behind the scenes to advance the wellbeing of women in the community. The Judi Hemmingway Memorial Fund will support projects that improve the lives of women in Perth County.

Judi passed away in February 2006 on her birthday at the age of 54 as a result of complications following surgery. Judi approached life with a quick wit and twinkle in her eye, qualities which served her well in living her passion of helping others, whether in her personal or work life. She was employed in the charitable sector for fifteen years first at S.A.A.I.L. (now ShelterLink Stratford-Perth) and then at Optimism Place.

“Mom made a difference in a lot of people’s lives,” recalls Jonathon Hemmingway, Judi’s son. “Laughter was a big part of that. Mom loved the people she worked with and she loved life!”

For the last ten years of her life Judi worked at Optimism Place, a shelter for abused women. While there she held various positions from Fundraiser, Crisis Counsellor, and Legal Advocate to finally Transition Program Coordinator. To better serve her clients Judi upgraded her skills earning a social service worker diploma at Conestogo College. Prior to that Judi worked at S.A.A.I.L. (now ShelterLink). ShelterLink assists young women and men who are homeless to find temporary emergency housing. It also offers programs to help young people develop life skills that will lead to employment and permanent housing.

Although a strong advocate for women’s rights, Judi was equally concerned for children. She understood that the issues that face women usually affect their children.

“Judi was a great social activist, especially around women’s issues,” said Anne McConnell, Executive Director of Optimism Place. “And she had a deep concern for children being the first person to shed a tear when children were being abused. She always rooted for the under dog!”

Judi was not new to the struggles that women face. A single mother, Judi lived most of her life in Stratford where she raised her son. “Judi would have been thrilled to know that this fund has been created in her memory,” said sister Caryl Baker. “It gives us a lot of comfort to know that Judi’s untimely death will benefit other women and continue Judi’s passion. It is a fitting memorial.”

Grants from the Judi Hemmingway Memorial Fund will support a variety of organizations and projects in Perth County that work to improve the lives of women and children. Causes include but are not limited to health, empowerment, abuse, justice and equity, self esteem, and education. To make a gift to the Judi Hemmingway Memorial Fund please contact the Foundation or visit the Foundation’s website www.spccf.ca and make an online gift to the Fund.

The Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation is a registered public foundation that serves the charitable sector in Perth County. The Foundation matches acts of caring with community needs by providing efficient, flexible donor services, grants to a broad range of community needs, and leadership in understanding and responding to current and emergent community needs and opportunities. For more information contact Elizabeth Hachborn at 519-271-1503 or email ehachborn@spccf.ca.

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For more information contact:

Elizabeth Hachborn
Stratford and Perth County Community Foundation
519-271-1503
ehachborn@spccf.ca