

GIVING FROM THE HEART, A LESSON FROM A FRIEND



SUZANNE HURLEY
Column

Rummaging through my purse, I found the butterfly necklace I thought I'd lost. Holding it in my hands, I stared at its soft pink and blue colours, as my fingers gently traced its wings. It was a gift from my best friend, John, and I recalled the words he said as I unwrapped it. "I have been given so much in life, I just want to give back." Tears flowed down my face then and now, at his thoughtful-ness.

Last Christmas, those words were John's mantra. Deciding to put his love into action, he donated to several food and toy drives, reaching out to help others less fortunate. Singing Christmas carols as he made his deliveries, I witnessed his enthusiasm and joy, which touched and warmed my heart. We had an extra special Christmas that year.

Unexpectedly, last May John fell ill. Medical tests revealed he had terminal cancer and only a few months to live.

Shocked and saddened, I was by his side during his final journey in life, spanning a mere six weeks. I held his hand late into the evenings as he talked about his life and how he had found peace in his later years. He passed away surrounded by love, always positive, always joyful.

Unfortunately, my own heart snapped in two. Grief wrapped around me and held on tight.

Now it is December again, one full year later, and I miss John so much that I had barely spared a

thought for the fact Christmas was arriving fast.

Amid my tears, I remembered his smiling face as he handed me this necklace, and surprisingly and without warning, I found my own smile slowly inch across my face. I recalled his delight last Christmas, his love in action, and how he cared for so many people who were in great need.

It was time for me to follow his example.

It was time for me to put my own love into action.

It was time for me to remember who John really was and the simple fact that he wouldn't want me moping around, miserable.

Clasping the butterfly necklace around my neck, I hurried to the grocery store. I was on a mission — a 'John' mission. Collecting food, I placed it in the trunk of my car and headed to a toy store to load up.

Later in the day, as I dropped my offerings in the collection boxes, I took a moment to hold on to my butterfly. Staring up to the heavens I whispered, "This one's for you, John." I also held in my heart everyone, like me, who is facing their first Christmas without a loved one. We were all united in spirit.

For the first time, in a long time, I experienced joy. I felt as if I had been in a cocoon and was now ready to burst forth like the butterfly, filled with Christmas goodwill.

John had given me the best Christmas present ever, as I was reminded again that by giving from the heart, my own heart snapped back together. I was whole again.

Merry Christmas, my friend. I will never, ever forget you, and your legacy lives on. I promise.

Fiction author Suzanne Hurley lives in Caledonia and has written 16 books.

EYE ON THE COMMUNITY



Rick Grant photo

Rick Grant took this photo of a lit Christmas tree in Caledonia Kinsmen Park. If you have a photo you'd like to share, email it to tbotting@sachem.ca, with a short description of what's happening and where it was taken. Photos must be high resolution JPGs, at least 1 MB in size, and include the first and last names of the photographer.

LETTERS & COMMENTARY

A STARK REMINDER

Regarding the story about the removal of the Mackenzie Mann memorial: I drive past the Mackenzie Mann roadside memorial at Airport and Nebo roads often.

I never knew this young lady, but it serves as a stoic reminder of the senseless accident that needlessly took her life.

For the city to remove this two weeks from Christmas is both callous and heartless; which seems to be their theme of the day.

As for being a driving distraction, I'm not sure how being at a four-way stop. I do agree with local residents that it truly serves as a stark reminder to slow down.

**GREG MACDOUGALL,
BINBROOK**

FLASHING ADS

Quoting Craig Murdoch

in this article: "roadside memorials can be a hazardous visual distraction to those driving past ..." Then maybe the flashing advertising sign on the Linc should be taken down as I find that a visual hazard!

**CATHERINE CASTELLAN,
HANNON**

MP MUST LEARN LOCAL CONCERNS

Leslyn Lewis, MP for Haldimand-Norfolk, is to be congratulated for posing her first question during House of Commons question period.

However, the topic was relations with Indigenous people in New Brunswick. As a Toronto lawyer only recently arrived in our community, she may not be aware that there are some significant issues with Indigenous people in the riding she was elected to represent that are perhaps worthy of her attention;

namely, two shut-down housing developments and a blocked highway bypass in Caledonia.

While she made time to attend a rally organized by Campaign Life Coalition, which backed her unsuccessful bid for the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada, she may wish to also include on her schedule some time learning about local concerns.

**GREG CRONE,
CALEDONIA**

PRESERVE CURSIVE

Doing away with cursive writing in schools is a big mistake. Cursive writing stimulates the brain and it gives a person character.

Also having done away with learning the tables is a big mistake.

Most teenagers are not even able to add or multiply in their head.

**LUCIENNE TUCKER,
DUNDAS**

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