

Hometown Hero Joyce Bazinet drives cancer patients to medical appointments throughout the Lower Mainland

Courage of cancer patients inspires volunteer driver

Editor's note: This story is part of our Hometown Heroes series, honouring Cloverdale volunteers and the work they do in our community. For more, read our Aug. 28, 2019 edition.

Joyce Bazinet is happy to help.

When she sat down with the *Reporter* to chat about her volunteer work as a driver for the Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society, it was immediately clear that the joyful, energetic retiree genuinely enjoys her work with the society.

The “very happily” retired woman began her career as a psychiatric nurse, before later becoming a teacher’s assistant to work with students who had special needs.

After a long career of helping people, she knew that, in retirement, she wanted to continue giving back.

The Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society (VCDS) is a force of volunteers that provides free transportation to cancer patients throughout the Lower Mainland, ensuring that people have a safe ride to and from medical appointments.

Since VCDS began in February 2016, more than 200 volunteer drivers and dispatchers have given of 70,000 hours of their time to the program.

According to the organization, drivers have made about 46,000 trips, driving 1,373,000 km — that’s nearly 250 times the length of Canada.

“When I saw the [VCDS] in the paper, I thought, ‘this is it. This is what I want to do,’” said Bazinet her three year anniversary as a volunteer, she said, “I love it.”

Samantha Anderson
Cloverdale Reporter

“It gives me a great pleasure to be helping people again.”

“I’ll get teary here,” she said, with an emotional laugh. “I get so, so encouraged by the courage, the bravery of these patients. You know they’re facing the hardest thing probably in their life, and we can still laugh in the car. We have great conversations.”

The conversation comes easily to her — she’s had a long life of talking to people through good days and through challenges.

It can be as easy as asking ‘do you remember when?’ or asking them what they do for a living — “if nothing else, you can talk about pets,” she said.

Others, she said, don’t want to talk at all. Which is perfectly fine, she emphasized.

“The real tragedy is, you have no idea how many people have no one to talk to. They don’t have family. They don’t have friends. They don’t even think they can ask their neighbour [to drive them].”

The conversation, and the support, is just as important as the actual drive, she said.

Many others use the service because family or friends cannot take them to weekly appointments over a long period of time — it can be prohibitive for a working person to take that much time off.



SAMANTHA ANDERSON

Joyce Bazinet volunteers four days a week with the Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society, driving cancer patients to and from medical appointments throughout the Lower Mainland.

Bazinet’s brother-in-law called on the VCDS’ services during his own treatments. His wife, Bazinet’s sister, was a teacher, and couldn’t take him to daytime appointments.

“I was glad that he knew, before he died, that somebody was [volunteering for the organization], as a thank you,” she said.

Bazinet volunteers four days a week, and typically drives between four and six patients to appointments over that period. The society volunteers wait for their patients while they’re at their appointments, and that can take up to five hours in some cases.

She has driven people from all walks of life to treatments in Vancouver, Surrey, Abbotsford and more. Each person has a story, and each is inspiring, she said.

“Every time they say thank you as they get out of the car, I say thank you back in my head. Because they’re giving me as much (as I give them).”

For more information on the Volunteer Cancer Drivers Society, or how to volunteer, visit www.volunteercancerdrivers.ca.