



EDITOR'S SCRIBBLINGS

Co-Editors Kristine Goodall and Shari Couture



I just walked up our street on a snowy weekday morning and noticed a neighbour of mine shoveling the walks. This is a common sight on a winter morning, however, as I got closer I noticed that she was three houses away from her own and making her way around the corner. She doesn't know this but her efforts put a huge smile on my face and motivated me to do the same. Thanks.

My neighbour was showing that she cares for where she lives and the people who live here. In an article in this month's Bugle Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett calls this caring for a space or place in our community the "ecology of community". She believes that these types of acts make it meaningful for people to live where they do.

This month's Bugle is full of evidence that our community is full of people participating in the ecology of our community by caring for our community. Thanks to our great contributors this issue is an informative read, shedding light on the numerous ways Brentwoodians "nurture the neighbourhood". However, beyond what is written in the following pages there are tons of other

people participating in many ways, sometimes in ways that they may not think of as "volunteering". Each small act of caring for our "place" builds communal meaning and, dare I say, personal meaning and direction. A little something I like to refer to as "building community with benefits".

Keep it up Brentwood and Happy New Year,

Shari



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Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett

Shari Couture

Polly Lee Knowlton Cockett's volunteer accomplishments are certainly impressive and we Brentwoodians are lucky to have her, but after interviewing her I also found myself struck by the power and depth of her ideas about community involvement. First, she sees volunteerism in many ways coming down to caring for where we live. Polly currently is completing her Ph.D. in Environmental Education and this is exactly what she is studying, something she calls the "ecology of community". She passionately describes "caring and nurturing a place or a space in your community" as one integral way of getting involved. This might be volunteering with the community garden, working with groups to care for areas of the community, painting murals or just making the effort to care for you back alley by pulling weeds as you walk.

As many know, this is not only something that Polly studies academically, it is something that she practices. Among many other things, she has taken on a central role in many socially ecological projects in Brentwood. She was the project manager for the prairie reclamation project at Dr. Coffin School, a main contributor to the whispering interpretive signs project, one of the key people involved in the mural projects in our community and has been writing Environews since 1998. For her this involvement is an avenue to "celebrate where we live". By embracing community projects she finds people are continually brought together where by they build relationships and a sense of place.

The second piece of her message that resonated with me was her belief that community ecology effortlessly and naturally invites life enriching developments with everyday taken-for-granted "community acts". Simple acts such as volunteering at soccer, voting, or taking a simple stroll can lead to unexpected community developments. The Brentwood murals began this way through community acts that links Cheri Mac and Polly to the murals initiator Lee Hunt. All three of these ladies won the 2005 Centennial Medal for their work on this project.

Very seldom is it a matter of a person coming forward and "taking on a project". Community initiatives usually are spontaneously co-constructed as people connect in smaller everyday community involvements. Projects develop, not because they are expected "duties", but because they grow as natural and meaningful parts of our lives.

Polly's family won the Volunteer Calgary Leadership Award in 2011. This brings me to the third particularly inspiring point I want to make. She makes a distinction between volunteering with and volunteering for your family. Both are important, however, she has found, the former (volunteering together as a family), invites a slightly different message. The evidence that this message can act as a catalyst for continued meaningful life choices is so clearly seen in Polly's children's amazing continued international volunteerism and career directions.

Thanks Polly for your contributions. I hope my "community act" of writing a Bugle article that was invited by another simple "community act" of meeting at a local coffee shop to talk, will inspire many more to build the ecology of Brentwoodian community.

For more information about her most recent award visit <http://www.youtube.com/user/volunteercalgary#p/u/12/r6O-cRU5vIU>



Polly and her daughter in April 2010 when volunteering for Habitat for Humanity in Guatemala



Polly's three children after receiving their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Awards for community service