



Scarboro lay missionaries Beverly Trach (L) and Maxine Bell (second from right) with Donna and John, member-volunteers at Our Place in Toronto. Beverly now serves in Brazil and Maxine in Guyana.

Our Place... a warm and friendly sanctum

By Maxine Bell

In the heart of Toronto there is a warm and friendly sanctum called Our Place. At this drop-in centre, members, staff, and volunteers provide a supportive, welcoming community to people experiencing mental health issues.

I discovered this wonderful sanctum when I went there to do volunteer work for the outreach part of Scarboro Missions' mission preparation program. Often we hear missionaries and volunteers say that in their service they received more than they gave. I learned the truth of this at Our Place.

On one occasion, I was playing pool with a member while others were waiting to play. They were always very patient and helpful to me, a beginner at the game. I asked one of the men waiting if he liked playing pool. His response was serious and straightforward: "I am the best player in the club."

Instead of getting laughs for his over-confidence, everyone around agreed and sang his praises. When it was his turn to play, I watched him from the snack bar where I was working. He was good, but having seen many of the members play, this man was possibly not the best. However, the others recognized his need to be affirmed as the best and they did so. This was a great lesson for me.

There are many other examples of caring, understanding, and support that the members of Our Place have for each other. I also witnessed this at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner planned and prepared by the members.

At the dinner, every volunteer and member-volunteer from all walks of life received a certificate of thank-you and a poem (written by one of the members), rolled up together and tied with a ribbon like a diploma. The members worked long hours on the food preparations, which were excellent and abundant, as well as on the decorations and entertainment. We were treated to songs, skits, joke telling, and musical solos, along with dinner and awards. The whole evening was warm, loving, and unforgettable for me and I cherish the memory. I send my "Thank you!" to all at Our Place (www.our-place.ca) for their gift to me.∞



Since 2001, Magda and Peter vanZyl have accompanied the people of Ascension parish, New Amsterdam, Guyana. Peter is a counselling social worker, and Magda, an ECE teacher and formerly part of a L'Arche community, works with special needs students.

That's the Spirit!

By Magda vanZyl

From the airplane, just before landing in Guyana two years ago, I saw a lush green country and two huge chocolate-brown rivers. Peter and I were about to begin mission with our first wild ride in a minibus from the airport. At the missioning ceremony in Canada when we made our commitments to Scarboro Missions, my prayer concluded with: "May my time in mission be a true journey in faith." Little did I know that travelling in the minibuses here would be literally journeys in faith as I find myself hoping and praying that I will arrive in one piece.

On our first day in New Amsterdam, members of the parish gave us a heart-warming welcome that brought tears to my eyes. We are blessed with a parish community that is active and alive.

Life is different here. Getting around town on foot or by bicycle, going to the market to buy our food, doing the laundry by hand, taking cold showers, having no electricity some days or evenings, living more simply, learning about the Guyanese people and their way of life.

I see many people who are struggling to survive and I am humbled knowing that I do not have to worry about my next meal, that I have sandals on my feet and a roof over my head. There are so many needs and I pray that I do not get overwhelmed by them all. Early this morning, I met a woman on her way to work or to market, walking proudly and singing praises to God with a beautiful voice. That's the Spirit.∞

A journey of faith

LEAVING A LIFE FILLED WITH FAMILY AND SERVICE IN CANADA
TO WALK WITH GOD IN A NEW LAND

By Barbara White

As the crimson sky gave way to daylight, our plane touched down in Georgetown, Guyana. This is to be the home of Scarboro lay missionaries Maxine Bell and I for the next three years as we live and work among the people here.

I first felt called to do mission work many years ago. After graduating from high school, I took nurses' training at the University of Alberta and worked for a short while before I married. My husband Glenn and I raised six children who are now grown and independent. During our 39 years together we did much traveling and enjoyed visiting other peoples and experiencing their different ways of life.

When my husband was nearing retirement, I was anxious to do something more with my nurses' training. Up until this time, I had been a stay-at-home mom and co-operator of our farm. So when the opportunity arose, we moved to British Columbia and bought a care home for 16 seniors. Here I could put my nursing to use and Glenn could get away from a nine-to-five office job.

Operating this home was a most enjoyable and fulfilling time in our lives. Fourteen years later we decided to retire and do some traveling while we still had our health and energy. We hoped to give some of our time to helping others in another country. However, God had other plans.

Five months after we sold the care home, Glenn was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. He died six months later.

The next couple of years were a time of turmoil and adjustment for me, but I feel that I have come to terms with my grief. I soon realized that living the 'easy' life was not enough for me and that I was being called to do something more with the time God has given me.

After researching many different organizations that do mission work, I decided to apply to Scarboro Missions. I wanted an organization with a faith base. I had heard of Scarboro Missions many years earlier when a Scarboro priest spoke at our parish in Ottawa. And *Scarboro Missions* magazine was always around our home.

When the application for the lay program arrived with its many questions and a request for me to write an autobiography, I was daunted. Then one day I was prompted to get going and lo and behold my words ran off the computer quite easily.

Things moved quickly from there and I was soon enrolled in the lay formation program. This was an excellent time of preparation for mission. I feel a deep gratitude to Scarboro Missions for being such a wonderful supportive community and giving lay people this opportunity to serve.

One of the most difficult aspects of going to mission overseas for three years was leaving my family, my seven grandchildren, and my friends. Yet, their blessings and affirmation confirm that I have made the right choice at this time in my life.

Since my arrival in Guyana, I am enjoying my work at the hospitals and the orphanages and it keeps me very busy. Sometimes it is pretty heart-wrenching, seeing all the poverty and neglect. All I have to offer is myself and my gifts, but with prayer and faith I know the Lord will lead me, and I pray for the courage and strength to follow God's will.∞



At the stelling, about to embark on a river journey with Juggernaut, a friend who does social work and counselling with AIDS patients. L-R: Scarboro missionaries Maxine Bell, Barbara White, and Magda vanZyl. Guyana.