

# St. Joseph's Auxiliary Opens Jo's Boutique

*By Jane Barry*

*The Greater Saint John Community Foundation*

The origins of the St. Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary (SJHA) date back to the days of the Depression when the Sisters of Charity were asked by Bishop A.E. LeBlanc and Father Francis Lockery, Pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Church, to open an infirmary to help the sick of Saint John. Rose Doherty, past President of the SJHA relates how in 1929, a group of women met with Father Lockery to organize help for the Infirmary by providing food and linens which were in short supply. In spite of the difficult economic times, the group succeeded in raising much-needed funds by holding teas, card parties and selling tickets in support of the facility.

Within a few years it became clear that the Infirmary was too small and plans were made for a new hospital. On completion of St. Joseph's Hospital, the women (SJHA is now open to men and women) increased their membership to meet the growing demand. Since those days close to a century ago, the SJHA has never looked back and faithfully carried on their mission of support to the hospitalized. In subsequent years funds were contributed by the SJHA for beds, furniture and equipment for the operating rooms, the cross which is still a visible landmark on the roof today and for outdoor signage on the building. They provided the organ and the Stations of the Cross for the chapel and whatever items were requested by the Sister Superior in charge of the hospital at the time.

In the mid 1980's, Sister Margaret Vickers asked the Auxiliary members if they would open a shop in the hospital lobby. The group agreed and earmarked funds from it for the benefit of the patients. Over the years they have been able to contribute televisions for all floors, radios, tapes, cooking utensils for the CAM unit, furniture, toys and books for the waiting area of the Speech Therapy Department, changing tables for the Emergency Department and over the bed tables for the patients' rooms. Drapes were donated to the cafeteria when it opened, along with equipment for the Gift Shop which has recently undergone a transformation. When monthly birthday parties for patients in the CAM unit take place the SJHA is there to volunteer and purchase supplies. Their members knit lap robes for patients to use as they travel from their rooms for tests and sew supplies for the comfort of mastectomy patients.

In recent years a new chapel has been constructed and again the Auxiliary has contributed to it. They are valued backers of the St. Joseph's Hospital Foundation for special projects such as the new garden and green space at the rear of the building. The Auxiliary also operates Sainly Scissors Salon which serves patients, staff, and the public explains Doherty. She has served as President of SJHA from 1994-1997 and from 2006-2009.

Elizabeth Cormier has been serving as President since 2009 and is proud to say their numbers have grown to over 200, thirty of whom are life members. The SJHA has "really good attendance and are very supportive" she adds good-humouredly. "It's a lot of fun". Last year, she and Treasurer Robin Whittaker conceived of a plan for the Auxiliary Gift Shop's make over. A committee took shape, completed a business plan and a search began for a person with retail experience. Wendy Gallant, a former long time retail business owner, volunteered to help. She has since become the coordinator of fundraising activities and part-time manager of the newly re-branded "Jo's Boutique", giving it a whole new identity with decor, a logo and radically different merchandise.

"The response has been wonderful" says Gallant. Over the few months the shop has blossomed with sales going through the roof. The Auxiliary appreciates the additional space they recently acquired and has expanded Jo's Boutique, complete with new decor, Country French fixtures and even chandeliers. "Things are hopping and new projects are also on the horizon" she adds. Patients, visitors and staff comprise their customer base.

The shop is staffed by dedicated volunteers, some with many years of service to the shop like Kay Kelly, Eleanor Horgan, Jackie Clarke Landers and Margaret Corkery. "Other volunteers to mention are Sandra Friars, Tanya Pettinger, Kathy Campbell, Kathy Cipolla, Mary Arseneau, Peggy Brittain, Barb Smith, Pat Dugay and Sat Virk" says Gallant. All proceeds from the shop are donated to the Patient Comfort Fund. Recent and current projects include sponsorship of the Eye Clinics, Donor Honour Luncheon and support for the Foundation's Dragon Boat Festival.

May 31 a Memorial Service is planned at St. Joseph's in Loch Lomond to honour their members. Plans are already well underway for a major pre-Christmas fundraiser called Christmas at The Lake; a 20-booth Christmas and Winter Lifestyle and Shopping Show scheduled for November 18- 20 at Lily lake Pavilion.



Rose Doherty, Tanya Pettinger, Wendy Gallant and Elizabeth Cormier are enthusiastic about "Jo's Boutique" the re-branded Auxiliary shop now open at St. Joseph's Hospital.

*Photo by Noel Chenier, Telegraph-Journal*



**Community Profile is a weekly column highlighting community causes and work done by non-profit organizations in the Greater Saint John area. It is contributed by Jane Barry, executive director of The Greater Saint John Community Foundation. Contact the foundation at 506-672-8880, [sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com](mailto:sjfoundation@nb.aibn.com) To view other Community Profiles go to [www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca](http://www.saint-john-foundation.nb.ca)**