

# A proud moment

There was a certain quaintness to arriving at the Haliburton Hospital in the middle of the night and pushing a doorbell to be granted access. But quaintness wasn't what you wanted when you had an emergency in the hospital's off hours. You wanted help fast. Urgently pushing a doorbell didn't quite do it.

It's hard to remember just how far we've come since the community pledged to raise \$6 million to build and enhance local healthcare facilities. That's because it's taken 10 long years to reach this point of celebration. This week marks the official completion of the \$6 million capital campaign but the facilities have been here long enough for us to take them for granted.

There were points along the way when it seemed the goal wouldn't be reached. Couldn't be reached. Hadn't we fundraised enough already? Could people give any more? Wasn't it the same people going to the same fundraising

*echo*

## editorial

*martha perkins*

events year after year? Not only was there donor fatigue but once the doors to the new facilities were open it was easier to forget that the community had not yet paid its share of the \$19.8 million cost.

But no one ever really gave up, least of all the Haliburton Highlands Health Services Foundation. It was formed shortly after the Ministry of Health gave its blessings for the project. Instead of setting up a fundraising committee, HHHS board chair Hugh Nichol pushed for the Foundation's creation instead. He knew that there would be the constant need for equipment and improvements long after the buildings were paid for, especially since the HHHS had already had to cut certain expenditures on its construction wish list to bring the construction costs below \$20 million. The Foundation would be responsible for raising the original \$6 million and then it could raise money for all the things the new healthcare facilities would need.

There were two trains of thought on how the money could be raised. One was that every property owner in Haliburton County take a one-time hit on their property taxes. It would spread the burden equally among property owners. But did the Foundation have the right to expect every property owner would be a willing participant, especially since two-thirds of them used their property only part of year? The other train of thought was that you needed donors who were committed to the cause. By having to raise the money for the healthcare expansion projects, people would appreciate those facilities more.

That's a debate that will never be won. The Foundation would be further along in its equipment fundraising had it not taken so long to pay off the capital debt but who knows how people would have reacted to being forced to contribute through property taxes?

What matters is that this community pulled together. It didn't give up faith in the project and it didn't stop digging into its pockets to give to one more fundraising event.

Looking back, the Foundation doesn't want to single out any individual donors because whether you bought a plate of cookies at a fundraising bake sale or donated \$130,000 in shares, all contributions were welcome and appreciated. However, this space can once again be used to point out one of the most significant ironies of the campaign: the person who donated the most amount of money was a person who lived his life with the least. The late Herb Hoffman, who rode around the village of Haliburton on his antiquated bicycle and shopped at the Lily Ann, bequeathed his entire estate to the Foundation, \$220,000. Is it a coincidence that after this became known there was a spike in donations?

So raise a toast to Herb Hoffman but praise each and every person who donated in any way to the cause. Congratulations. We did it.