

RCOW History for 30th Anniversary Celebration

Bruce Norman's memories for the 1994-1998 five year period (as requested by 30th Anniv.Chair, Susan Sheppard

This 1994-1998 five year period is mid-way in our 30 year journey. I there were two significant club developments, which still “have legs” today. One falls into the Community Service area (Cedarbrook Home story) and one in the Club Service area (the OABE story).

(1.)First, our enduring **Community Service story**: Cedarbrook Society commenced around 1994.

- It founded Cedarbrook Home which later became Rose Cherry Home for Kids and today is operating as The Darling Home of Kids.
- Our Club provided startup funds and awareness support for the Cedarbrook Home which was Ontario's first childrens' hospice and respite centre. We donated the an initial \$25,000 (January 30, 1996) towards the project and several of our Members were actively involved providing their professional experience. In addition, we made the home the focus of the 1996 Oakville Rotary TV Auction and challenged other Rotary clubs in the surrounding are to help raise a total of \$250,000 – approximately 25% of the money needed to open the home.
- The Club member who really kicked-started this project is PP Ren Henderson (1996-97). The need in the community for this service was recognized by Ren Henderson and he brought the project forward to the Club for consideration. It was embraced by the Club and the project really got started by Rotary (and Ren's connections).
- As I mentioned, Cedarbrook Home evolved into Rose Cherry Home for Kids when Don Cherry and his family charitable foundation contributed significant money to expand the home. The home was expanded again and this time, Michelle Darling's charitable foundation stepped up to finish the project with many, many others, both financial contributors and volunteer corporations to complete the project. Now operating a The Darling Home For Kids, it celebrated its 10th year anniversary last month. It is still governed by the Cedarbrook Society charitable foundation. By the way, I recently reported on this in the Rotarooter and referred to their website and DVD anniversary video. If you are interested in learning more about its past and present history, visit: darlinghomeforkids.ca.
- It was a 'rocky road' in the early years and we wondered if it would ever come into service for the medically fragile children and their loving, and exhausted, parents
- As we now know it is a true success. I remember PP Don Kerr saying that the “Angels have a way of making it happen” even when it looks impossible. It's been quite a mystic and determined destiny.

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Bruce Norman's memories for the 1994-1998 five year period (continued)

(2.) And now for the enduring **Club Service story**: The Oakville Awards for Business Excellence – which commenced around 1994.

- It was a time of change for the Club as we looked for new directions for our fund raising efforts. We voted our Bingo evening event (at the hall on Speers Rd) “off the RCOW island” when we dropped it due to drastically decreased revenues and the divisive feeling over lack of general participation in the monthly commitment of the Club.
- The Club had struck a strategic planning committee to look at alternative fund raising events and the OABE concept won out.
- Several Club members who were instrumental in the beginning of this project were:
 - PP Ron Planche (1998-99) who moved it forward with his marketing and graphics expertise. The OABE logo which has become central to our ‘brand’ was designed by Ron.
 - PP Harry Levine (1999-2000) with his knowledge of other projects like this which he had seen in his extensive Rotary travels in the world! (he visited the Hamilton Business Awards celebration with PP John Boyne, 1995)
 - The late PP Don Kerr (1989-90) with his architectural mind and flair for style and class
 - PP David Batchelor (1994-95 & 1995-96) with his IT expertise for data collection and event co-ordination
 - My apologies if there are others who were in on the ground floor who I failed to mention them
- This has a fabulous 19 years of Club history because as our single biggest and most enduring fund raiser AND, for hundreds and hundreds of Oakville high school students and successful Oakville businesses, it’s been a real game-changer.