

## **Carol Elderkin**

Carol Elderkin of Shediac River is drawn to working with individuals facing challenges, eager to help people be survivors rather than victims. For her, building a more peaceful community means helping folks develop their self-esteem, resiliency and other life skills.

Originally from the west coast, Carol followed her parents east in 1986 and has remained in New Brunswick ever since, working for years as a dietary cook at an area nursing home. These days, she is finishing an Eastern College program to be a child/youth addiction support worker while also running a hobby farm.

Despite her busy schedule, Carol is an active volunteer with many organizations.

At Crossroads for Women, she volunteers to be on call when sexual assault victims are at the hospital looking for help. She provides these women with resources, support and gives them confidence to seek help from other community agencies.

Carol also volunteers with the Canadian Mental Health Association, giving presentations on mental health issues in hopes of diminishing their stigma. She also lends a hand whenever the association holds a fundraiser. (She even volunteered to sit in a dunk tank to help raise over \$700 for the association.)

As well, Carol is also an advocate for MADD - Mothers Against Drunk Driving. As a former member of its Board of Directors, she contributed her energy to give presentations on MADD's behalf.

More recently, she helped a classmate distribute 25 bookbags filled with various supplies for homeless or at risk youth at Youth Quest.

In January of this year, Carol been volunteering with the YMCA of Greater Moncton's Plusone Mentoring Program, again making a difference in the lives of youth.

Through the Plusone program, Carol was matched with a youth, her 'mentee', who had a troubled background. She became the youth's cheerleader, encouraging her mentee and providing guidance on everything from exercise and healthy eating, to dealing with her emotions in a positive way.

Carol advocates for her mentee and is not afraid to speak up on her behalf when necessary. With Carol's help, the youth has gained the courage to advocate for herself in a respectful manner.

As well, Carol taught her mentee new skills to deal with bullying. The youth, who was once labelled 'at risk', will now ask for help at school and in community programs instead of getting embroiled in physical altercations.

Carol has encouraged her mentee to attend other community programs to further her development. She has volunteered to attend activities with her mentee, events such as the Pride Parade, to ensure the youth is comfortable in new situations.

While she realizes she doesn't have any magical powers to 'save' people, Carol humbly works as a compassionate, non-judgmental sidekick, offering guidance with warmth and encouragement. She is wonderfully empathetic and makes all youth in the program feel important and valued.

And let's not forget her creativity! Carol has no shortage of ideas and often shows up at Plusone meetings toting her own materials to create, have fun and share. Carol's dedication and compassion to her youth mentee and to all in the Plusone program is truly incredible.

Thank you, Carol, for helping others in so many ways... helping them to become their best selves... for building resiliency in youth, our future leaders... for building peace in our community.