

## **Gerry Gildart**

Gerry Gildart had a rough start in life. Born in Edmundston, he moved to Moncton at 15, relocating with his parents and nine siblings. He had a hard time adapting to the hub city. It didn't help that his dad was an alcoholic working two jobs while his mom stayed home with the children. By 16, Gerry had quit school, left home and was living here and there with friends (youth he describes as "a bad crowd"), getting in trouble from time to time.

Things might have spiralled further downward had it not been for the support of the YMCA of Greater Moncton. The Y became Gerry's 'go-to' place, a spot to shoot hoops in the gym, swim, play ping-pong and make new friends. The Y made him feel accepted, a part of something. He is grateful to have had the mentorship of special individuals at the Y, including Bill Gerhardt and Bob Cameron.

At 20, Gerry went back to school to become a carpenter. In 1972, he graduated in the NBCC carpentry program – at the top of his class – and was hired to work for a teacher's construction company.

Fast forward to 1980. Gerry had such a wealth of experience that family and friends encouraged him to start his own business. Gildart Construction Ltd. was launched and Gerry has been working for himself ever since, spearheading the management of a wide variety of construction projects from local restaurants like Pizza Delight, Burger King and Tim Hortons to multi-million-dollar ventures like Chateau Moncton.

Despite his busy professional life, Gerry always makes time to give back to his community. He volunteered to help develop the Papal site in Moncton during the Pope's 1984 Canadian Tour. He has helped both financially and with construction projects at Harvest House and has also volunteered serving meals at St. Augustine's Church. As well, he became a mental health advocate after helping his brother, who struggled with bipolar disorder.

Since March, Gerry has also touched lives in our community as a YMCA PlusOne Mentor. YMCA PlusOne Mentoring gives youth an opportunity to connect with positive adult role model, in a healthy and safe environment. The program helps both the young person and the mentor achieve their full potential.

Gerry has been extremely dedicated to his mentor role, travelling an hour roundtrip to attend weekly meetings with his young mentee at the Y. Despite the youth not being as keen on accepting help, Gerry continued to work with the young man,

assisting him with everything from resume preparation to seeking addiction help to encouraging him to graduate from high school. The youth has since graduated and is in a detox program.

Gerry was a true inspiration and support for the young man and will likely be for his next mentee. (Gerry has already offered to work with another youth.)

Gerry Gildart not only brings a kind, caring nature to his volunteer work as well as a willingness to share the story of how he turned his life around; he also stresses to youth that they are WORTHY of a happy life. He spreads his philosophy that focusing on joy and happiness is the key working towards a good life.

Thank you Gerry for your many contributions as a champion of peace in our community!