

MEDIA RELEASE

Beyond the Poppy: The Vital Contributions of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 26

KELOWNA, BC, November 9, 2018 – For over forty years, as Remembrance Day approaches, they have occupied street corners and grocery store entry ways, standing in quiet dignity as they offer poppies by donation. Locally and across the nation, members of the Royal Canadian Legion have become a beloved part of the Remembrance Day memorial rituals that allow us to stay connected to the sacrifices made by veterans in exchange for our freedom and independence.



Royal Canadian Legion Branch 26 (Kelowna) member, Bob Ross offers a poppy to a passer-by at the Mission Park Shopping Centre.

It may seem like after November 11th, they recede back to the comforts of their retirement. But in fact, their humble work continues all year round.

Beyond their annual poppy campaign, locally, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 26 (Kelowna) plays a vital role in our community. They are passionate stewards for the health and well-being of some of our most vulnerable populations on each end of the generational spectrum: the aged and children.

Every month the Legion features a busy entertainment calendar for seniors; everything from special lunches and the popular Saturday meat draw, to dances and parties that allow folks to get out and ‘twist’, ‘jive’ and ‘waltz’ to their favourite music. For many in this stage of life, the Legion has become a social hub – a place to connect with friends, share stories and have fun.

“I felt lost until I found the Legion,” notes Legion volunteer, Ila Hicklin, whose husband of 40 years passed away two years ago. “But then I started volunteering, and I met my friends and now we just have so many good times together.”

On average the poppy campaign in Kelowna raises approximately \$175,000 every year. The social events offer further opportunities for the Legion to raise funds. For many years, they have consistently given to the KGH Foundation to advance patient care for the elderly and children. Notably, in 2008, they completed a two year pledge of \$50,000 for Hospice House.

However, this fall, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 26 presented the KGH Foundation with their largest gift in history - \$100,000 to go specifically towards JoeAnna's House, a home away from home for the families of patients who must travel to KGH for advanced medical care. This includes veterans and their families from across the interior of BC. The vast majority of these patients are frail elderly and critically ill children.

"We were very moved when we heard about the need for JoeAnna's House," says Jim White, President of the RCL Branch 26. "This project represents the values that we hold very dear – that as a community, it is our duty to take care of one another in the darkest times."

"It is a great honour to receive this gift," says Chandel Schmidt, the KGH Foundation's Director of Annual Programs. "Their kindness, generosity and earnest care for this community knows no bounds. This gift will have a huge impact for generations to come."

Lest we forget.

In gratitude to our veterans for everything they have given us in the past, and continue to give today to support a better future for all.

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