Dundas Heartbeat

Improving your odds against Canada's #1 killer.



Betty Allen shares memories of Dundas County Chapter. See story on inside.

Your donations help give someone a second chance.

Produced in association with the Dundas Chapter of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario

Elma man praises WDMH, heart institute

Greg Hewitt
The Chesterville Record

ELMA – Philip Plumb remembers exactly when his life changed. "One a.m. on October 22, 1996."

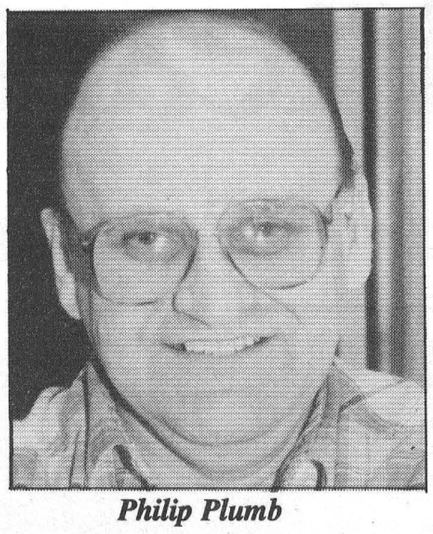
Plumb's chest tightened up. He thought it was a chest cold, but it didn't settle in like a chest cold should. "You don't want to accept that it's something else. Now I'm aware of what it was."

Plum, 55, lives in Elma. He's been a teacher at North Dundas District High School since 1969. On October 22, he suffered his first of two mild heart attacks - the second just two days later - beginning his experience with what he says was top notch care, first at Winchester District Memorial Hospital, then at the Ottawa Heart Institute.

Plumb not only praises the care he received at WDMH and the Heart Institute, but says they provide a crucial service that must be retained in these times of cutbacks.

"I was in dire straits," Plumb says of the first heart attack, and "again, still not accepting it to myself," after the second.

Plumb credits Dr. Archibald, and his team who at WDMH took "total command" of the situation after the first heart attack. A drug called Streptokinase was administered intravenously, and it removed a blood clot. Having the heart attack was like a dimmer switch, Plumb says, being turned down slowly. The drug turned that dimmer switch back up.



Philip Plumb

"It was like life off, life on. It's amazing," Plumb says. "The fact that they have this medication, and that the doctors are aware of it, it's amazing."

But when you have a heart attack, Plumb says, your greatest fear is having another. Two days later, at 4 a.m., Plumb again experienced a spreading, dull pain. "Hitting my finger with a hammer hurt a heck of a lot more."

This time, at WDMH, a similar drug was administered. Dr. Schnurr, and Plumb's own G.P., Dr. Adamson, along with nurses, again delivered excellent care.

But it was clear that surgery was needed to prevent any further trouble. The next day, Plumb was at the Ottawa Heart Institute, where he was seen by Dr. Davies, a top cardiologist.

"Dr. Davies said I was a number one candidate to have an operation immediately, and I said yes, go ahead."

Plumb was given a procedure called angioplasty, in which a catheter is inserted in through the leg into the heart, and the clogged artery is spread. A small mesh tube is permanently inserted.

Today, Plumb has been taken off the powerful heart medications that slowed him down mentally and physically, and now takes two less powerful medications - as he will for the rest of his life. But he's looking forward to returning to his teaching job at NDDHS on February 3. Still on a slower pace, but grateful to be able.

"I received very little damage because all the people and facilities were there where I needed them - at the general local hospital and the specialists in Ottawa. I just wouldn't be here today without them, or I'd be in pretty bad shape."

Plumb's fellow teachers at North Dundas, and the students, have been very supportive, Plumb says. "We have a very good staff and an excellent student body. They're good kids, and that means a lot, too."

Plumb is also grateful to the dietician, Shannon Smith, who visited him at home. At one time, Plumb was "grossly overweight" at 242 lbs. Now, he weighs 42 lbs. less with another 30 to go. "Having that person come to me was very important."

Plumb says his return to work at NDDHS is his "chance to see if I can hack it or not." But he feels he's in pretty good shape.

"I feel very fortunate."

Allen remembers decades with chapter

Melissa Batchilder
The Chesterville Record

KEMPTVILLE - You've got to have heart... and that's something Betty Allen isn't lacking.

Although she now tends quietly to the every-day chores of life, at one time Betty's name was synonymous with the Heart and Stroke Foundation in Dundas County. Undoubtedly, there isn't a role she didn't play in the structure, organization and movement of the chapter and when she looks back on those years, she beams with pride.

But the smile she wears isn't because of what she gave to the organization, rather the humble mother of five and former school bus driver delights in the hundreds of people she met and good fortune she had to be able to be a member.

"They were really marvelous. It was a really special time for me when I was with Heart and Stroke," she says of the 20 years she spent in the wings of the local chapter.

It was 30 years ago this coming fall that Betty attended the first meeting of the Dundas chapter in Williamsburg.

"What happened was ironic," she says, as she begins to tell the story of her involvement. "I was selling bond tickets here in Kemptville for the hospital and there was a demonstration by what was then known as the Heart Fund, going on."

The Heart Fund's provincial co-ordinator happened to be there that night, Betty explains, and she was introduced.

"It sort of began there. When it was decided a chapter would be formed in Dundas County, they called me. And I was elected as a captain for Hallville where I was living then."

For the next 20 years, Betty led a battle against the disease which claims the lives of thousands of Canadians each year. "In those 20 years I got to know a lot of nice people along with such names as Dr. Wilbert Keon and Dr. Lyall Higganson." Both are well-known and respected heart specialists.

Along with others in her chapter, Betty canvassed, organized meetings, attended many meetings, she chuckles, and did what they could to raise funds for Heart and Stroke disease.

"I was a captain for a number of years and then I went on and was president for a long time," she remembers.

Although at the time Betty joined in the late 1960s, she was still quite naive about heart and stroke disease, as years wore on her awareness of the deadly conditions grew. Family members and friends gradually succumbed to heart disease and stroke.

"We had to be educated. As president of the organization I had to act in different capacities and always ensure we had speakers to provide deeper understanding and education for us."

As Learning a tremendous amount is something she credits the local chapter for. Perhaps, the most vital lesson she absorbed was "no matter how much money you raise one year, there is still more needed the next."

It's the number one killer in Canada, she says, and "we never know how quickly or soon it can be on our doorsteps."

The research already conducted is so valuable, she adds, but there is still a lot more to be done. "So many people have benefited from it, but there are still people dying."

Despite her retirement from the local chapter 10 years ago, Betty still continues to support the cause. She encourages people to examine how their own lives are affected by the disease.

She remembers only too well how quickly it affected her own when her husband succumbed to a heart attack in 1987. Remembering that, not so much what she has given of herself, is what keeps her believing in the extreme value of finding a cure.

February is Heart & Stroke month

Joan Larocque
President, Dundas County Chapter

Dear Neighbors,

February, otherwise known as Heart and Stroke Month, is fast approaching. This is the month when the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario particularly benefits from the help of its dedicated volunteers. Once again, we will be asking for your financial support when one of over three hundred Dundas County residents knocks on your door during Heart Month.

On behalf of the Dundas Chapter of the Heart and Stroke Foundation, I wish to say thank you to all the dedicated canvassers who put in such great time and effort going door to door in probably the coldest month of the year to help raise the needed funds for research, health promotion and public education. I also wish personally to thank all the board members who volunteer their time and talents throughout the year to help promote the activities of the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

In the past 40 years, the death rate from heart disease has been cut in half, however, it continues to be the single largest cause of death among Canadians. The most recent statistics show that (annually) almost 80,000 Canadians lose their lives to Heart Disease and Stroke. This is the same as losing the entire population of a city the size of Kingston! Therefore, we need you to help fight this killer.

There are many ways in which you can help. First, through your generous donations, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario is able to fund research into the causes and cures of Heart Disease and Stroke as well as by providing Health Promotion Programs to educate people re: how to decrease the risks and to lead a heart healthy lifestyle. Therefore, please give generously to the dedicated volunteer who comes to your door.

Secondly, you can help by becoming a volunteer with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Something as simple as making a few phone calls or helping out at special events will help the Foundation spread the word. If you are interested in volunteering, please do not hesitate to contact me at (613) 543-4393 or any other board member or call the Heart and Stroke office at (613) 938-8933.

Through your generous donations of time and money, the Heart and Stroke Foundation has been successful in increasing public awareness and decreasing the risks. I thank you for your past generosity and seek your continued support as the canvassers knock on your doors this month.

Morrisburg man thankful for support during recurring medical problems

Catherine Thompson
The Morrisburg Leader

MORRISBURG — Area resident Danny Bilmer was somewhat surprised to see his 25th anniversary last year, and didn't really expect to live to his 49th birthday.

"I gave my wife Nancy her diamond because I didn't think I would make it. When I was in the Ottawa Civic last year, I was of that mind," he said.

Yet in January 1997, he is alive and while not in robust health, he is living a life to his best capabilities.

"I'm not here to tell you my troubles," he said pleasantly. "I'm alive and walking around. But if anyone wants to know about stroke and heart surgery, I can tell them about it."

Danny first became aware of serious health problems around 1975, when he was having trouble pulling a lawnmower, and became nauseated. At the time, he thought it was nerves, but the problem was diagnosed as a leaking aortic valve. In 1979, he had surgery to replace the valve with a mechanical valve made of calf tissue, the material used at that time.

Years later in 1991, he had surgery to replace the valve, which was leaking again, with a valve made of stainless steel. According to medical opinion of the time, it was the best replacement, "a Cadillac" of valves. Danny said he was lucky he never had a heart attack, because his doctors were so vigilant in monitoring his condition. In both cases, Dr. Pierre Bedard a cardio-surgeon at the Ottawa Heart Institute did the surgery, under advisement of cardiologist Dr. Michael Baird.

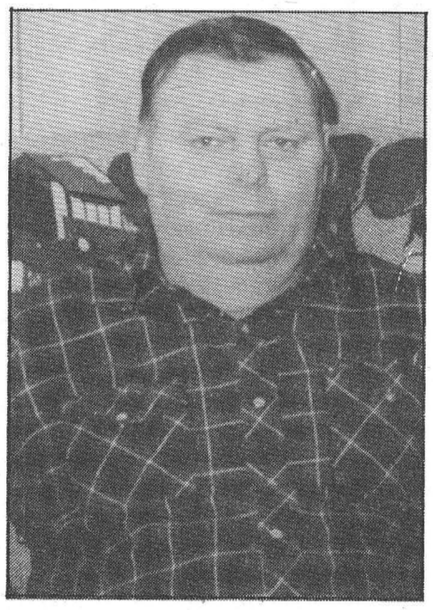
Although heart surgery is invasive, with painful after effects, Danny said, "it's not like having a stroke. If you have to cough after the heart surgery, it hurts. But after a stroke, I lost things I will never get back, because I can't remember people. I know who they are, but can't call them by name."

Danny took a couple of months off work at Fetterly's Garage in Iroquois after his first heart surgery, and a few months after the second, but in each case returned to work, with a fair recovery.

Back in August 1987, Danny had had an episode in which his "face, hand and arm went bad. They called it a ministroke at the time."

According to one medical opinion, this was a stroke caused by a clot on the valve, although this was never definitely proved. Doctors did a further investigation, including a biopsy of the kidneys, and arrived at a diagnosis of systemic lupus. This is an autoimmune disease in which the body attacks itself. It is a lifelong disorder in which the sufferer experiences great fatigue, and may also have strokes.

Danny was treated with Coumadin, a blood thinner to prevent strokes and told



Danny Bilmer

to walk three miles a day in an hour's time. Walking is also recommended by the Ottawa Heart Institute for heart disease.

In March 1994, he said, "something happened at work. I don't know what it was, but I came home and went to Ottawa to see my lupus doctor (Dr. Susan Lavoie at the Ottawa Civic Hospital). They thought it was my speech."

Lavoie told him to work at "10 miles an hour, not 90 miles an hour. I told her I had to work at 120 miles an hour, so she said, 'You can't work.'"

Danny's general practitioner Dr. Wayne Domanko was of the opinion that he had a stroke at the time, but this was never proved. In any case, Danny stopped his regular employment at Fetterly's Garage.

Last February, Danny had another incident, experiencing a bad headache, confused speech and inability to speak. In the Ottawa Civic Hospital, a catscan showed scar tissue, and a clot which had lodged in a vein in the brain, affecting the speech area. Because the clot blocked off the blood flow, an area in the brain died, leaving some permanent damage.

A transesophagial showed another clot sitting on the aortic valve. This time, doctors determined definitely the clots had caused the stroke.

They sent him home with increased Coumadin and added aspirin. On a return visit two weeks later, a transesophagial revealed the clot had dissolved from the aortic valve.

At that time doctors thought he was on the right treatment, but Danny soon started suffering from headaches again, and another stroke occurred in May.

At the time, he and his brother-in-law Dalton were planning to go to Lancaster to obtain chickens and turkeys. "This is something I do to keep myself sane, and I had a hard time," Danny said.

Dalton had to help Danny get dressed, and later Danny's son Matthew helped with the chickens and turkeys. Danny stayed at home that night because his own doctor was unavailable, and the next day, his daughter Amanda drove him to Winchester Hospital. Later he was taken to Ottawa Civic, where he remained eight days. Tests showed a clot on the opposite side of the brain, where the second stroke occurred.

Doctors thought the second stroke should never have happened, because their blood thinner treatment should have prevented it. He was then placed on prednisone, a steroid treatment which helps to kick in a lower immune system, also a treatment for Lupus.

But one harmful side effect is bone deterioration, and doctors gradually decreased his dosage from 50 milligrams daily to a maintenance dose of five milligrams. Since then he has had no further strokes, and the doctors are pleased with the improvement.

His dosage has been reduced from 33 pills for all conditions to 12-14 daily, but the medication makes him tired, and sometimes he has to nap following the morning dosage.

Despite the multiple problems, Danny is not complaining. He is proud of the fact he worked for 30 years, 19 of which were spent at Fetterly's Garage.

And although he is not working now, he received his driver's license again at Christmas, which he had lost after the stroke last year. Doctors advised the Ministry of Transportation of his medical problems, but neurological tests in September showed he could again drive.

"That was my Christmas present," he said. He can now get to appointments and visit his brother Larry on Avonmore Road, who has a team of mules he likes to drive.

Danny continues to walk and plans on keeping turkeys and chickens again in the spring. He helps out where he can, whether it's housework, or helping as team captain in the Heart and Stroke canvass. Before his stroke last year, Danny's team collected $590 from his area for the Dundas chapter.

Danny also spent a year and half volunteering at Winchester Hospital, giving out drinks, talking and reading to patients. "I met a lot of people, and I felt better because even if it was only one person, I helped someone," he said.

His halo appearance belies his ongoing medical problems, a fact noted by Dr. Roberts Giaccone. "When a man looks as good as you, and I read your health history, I'm amazed," Nancy quoted the neurologist as saying.

"I give a lot of credit to the people in Morrisburg and Dr. Domanko who would call every day about my blood, even on the weekend," Danny said.

"I have to thank Nancy and the kids. They have to keep talking to you so you won't go crazy. A lot of nights I'd go to bed, not feeling very good. And I have to give them full credit."

DUNDAS COUNTY CHAPTER - HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

A small group of dedicated volunteers organized the first canvass for the Ontario Heart Foundation in the mid 1960's. The focus was on Winchester and the surrounding area. By 1968, the group had organized themselves into a chapter structure and had elected Betty Allen of Hallville as the first President.

As the Foundation grew, the new chapter expanded their campaign into the rest of the county by utilizing student manpower from the two high schools: Seaway District High School and North Dundas District High School. During those years, revenue continued to increase at a slow but steady pace and the first initiatives in education which included pamphlet distribution, filming viewings and speakers' presentations, were begun.

In 1983, the Dundas County Chapter was formally recognized as a chartered chapter of the Foundation and Mrs. Betty Allen was presented with the charter at a ceremony in Toronto. She continued to serve as President of the chapter until 1985, when she was presented with a plaque for her 18 years of service to the Foundation.

The charter was reissued to the chapter in 1985 shortly after the Foundation's 1984 name change to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario.

In the mid 1980's, major changes were afoot within the Foundation. Firstly, chapters became more responsible and accountable for set revenue goals and secondly, greater emphasis was placed on educational programming. In order to support these new directives it was essential that a more comprehensive chapter structure be formulated. As a result, each chapter was now required to have seven mandated positions in place at each annual meeting in order to retain their chartered chapter status.

In 1986, Allan Sharkey of Chesterville became the new President and began implementation of the new strategies. The chapter developed considerably during the next 3 years and began the major move to adult canvassers. It was also during Allan's term that the Heart to Heart program was started.

In 1989, Mary Steele assumed the presidency and again the chapter flourished and continued to grow. The Board grew from the seven original positions to a group of fourteen members including a Vice-President, Chairperson of Human Resources, Chairperson of Jump Rope for Heart and some Branch Representatives as well as Members-at-Large. The first formed education committee also began to hold regular meetings and to offer more formal programs such as Brainstorming seminars and CPR courses.

Lorne Bouck: Loss of energy led to diagnosis, valve replacement and double bypass restored heart health for 75-year-old

Sandra Lee Johnston
The Iroquois Chieftain

Meeting this reporter at the door, there is nothing to demonstrate to a stranger that Lorne Bouck underwent heart surgery less than two years ago.

The broad smile on his face and the ease with which he glides through the interview certainly gives hope to others who may find themselves in a similar position.

Born on September 29, 1921, Lorne is 75 years of age, and is looking forward to many more years in the village he calls home.

His introduction to the fact that something was amiss as far as his health was concerned, began early in 1995. He started to show signs of being extremely tired all the time, even when he was not exerting himself. "Daily chores became too much, I had no ambition to do the routine items that I enjoyed each day; I just seemed to have no energy," says Lorne.

He adds, "I never had any pain and my blood pressure was never high, none of the signs that would point to heart trouble."

As time passed things were not improving, Lorne found that he was even more tired and less energetic than ever, so they (his wife, Helen and himself) decided to have a doctor check things out. A cardiogram later (St. Lawrence Medical Clinic) and Lorne was on his way to have an Echocardiogram done at the Ottawa General Hospital. Meeting Doctor Wielgosz who would guide him along the rocky road that lay ahead was a bonus for Lorne. "He informed me that the Echo showed there was a problem with my aortic valve." This is the one between the left ventricle and the (ascending) aorta, composed of three segments (semilunar cusps). The function of this valve is to prevent the regurgitation of blood at the entrance of the aorta to the heart.

Things were not urgent at this time and so Lorne was put on a six month waiting list. This was in March. Helen continued to notice how Lorne seemed to be declining even further. "We spent Father's Day (June 18) at the cottage," she explains, "Lorne did not seem like himself, he not only stayed inside all day but slept a good part of it away." Always an active man, this behavior was not normal. He seemed distant, according to Helen and was not interested in the grandchildren... and he always wanted to spend time with the kids! The following day was terrifically hot and he remained in the basement, tinkering and such; again unlike him to do this on such a wonderful summer day at the lake. She worried but did not have long to dwell on the matter. The next Monday he got a call to go to Ottawa, and since he was getting weaker, the medical decision was made to operate. He was then bumped a few days back again due to emergency cases that took priority, but on June 29, at 6 a.m., Helen wished him luck, and watched as he was rolled away to the operating room.

Helen recalls, (her diary is up to date and packed full of every detail), that this was a tough day for her and the family as they waited to hear from the O.R. team. The operation was to start at 7 a.m. with Doctor Bedard of the Heart Institute heading the team who would replace the defective valve. The operation lasted a very long five hours. "The valve was embedded and so the procedure was more difficult than had been anticipated," explains Helen. Lorne had opted for an xenograft, which means a porcine valve (pig valve) would be replacing his own. He explains that the doctor told him that the normal method of deciding which type will be used is that anyone over 70 years of age gets a porcine valve while those under 70 usually get a mechanical valve. The porcine valve is expected to last 7 to 10 years but necessitates some anticoagulation therapy, while the mechanical valve is more durable and thus lasts longer than the porcine but requires long term anticoagulation medication (eg. Warfarin; Coumadin). It is noteworthy here as well to mention that human donors can donate valves, upon death that are preserved and utilized when the need arises if a match (fit) is possible. These are rare, even in the 90s; proposed life span is 10 to 15 years and they bear long term anticoagulation therapy.

As Helen reads her diary, Lorne rocks in his favorite chair listening intently. "He was taken off the respirator that very evening, things were going so well after the operation," she continues, pleased even now with this development. She tells how family were allowed in to visit for two minutes at a time. "He was moved to ICU (Intensive Care Unit) after receiving two pints of blood, and the next day he returned to his room. This was July 1. It is marvellous what they accomplish, you know they had him up three times that very day."

Helen keeps recounting the exceptional progress that Lorne made, "He was up walking the very next day again, this was July 2, and as we had been warned, since most patients develop pneumonia, fluid had developed on his left lung; walking helps this condition to dissipate, and so he had to walk." The next day according to Helen was a tough one for her husband and then on the 4th of July when she arrived to stay with him, he was going through a tough day, really feeling badly. "Nonetheless, they had him up and walking down the hall and up and down the stairs. On July 5, she attended a discharge meeting along with her daughter where she learned what was expected when he returned home, both from him and those who would be there to care for him.

"We picked Lorne up from the Heart Institute on July 6 and brought him home... eight days after the valve replacement and a double by-pass operation!"

Once home and settled in, watching the ships ply the St. Lawrence, Lorne's recovery continued in familiar surroundings. He began his exercise program on the 8th with a 20 minute walk; by the 13th he was up to 30 minutes per day, twice a day. The 18th of July saw him walking 40 minutes each day (twice a day); wonderful progress for sure!

Lorne interjects at this point, suggesting that he has never looked back, "I still keep up with my exercise program every day... when the weather is inclement or too cold, I walk indoors. I am up to 1.2 miles a day now and I exercise twice a day inside for 10 minutes, morning and evening. I never miss my workout or my banana, I eat one every day."

When questioned about how this experience changed their lives, they both smile. Helen laughs as she tells that she does not bake cakes and pies like she used to. (Coming from a farm, she was most proficient in the baking department.) "I make muffins from the health cookbook, you know, things like that, I never use butter any more, and we watch the fat intake closely and avoid salt," she adds.

Lorne says he makes certain that he eats his All-Bran for breakfast, they have their supper at noon (big meal) and then go lightly on the dinner meal at night. "I try to maintain my weight in the 165 pound area."

They both agree they have slowed, the garden is small, "Just some cucumbers and tomatoes now, and we hire the lawn mowing out and the snow removal in the driveway; but we play bridge three to four times a week, that is our recreation now."

Lorne is not on any prescription drugs. "I take a baby aspirin every day, that is about it," he says. "When I go to the dentist, I have to take numerous penicillin tablets before and after my visit to guard against infection; that is something very important when a valve has been replaced."

Dundas County Chapter

1997 Campaign - Chairpersons and Captains

North Section

Chairperson - Helen Summers, Winchester.

Captains - Mary Thompson, Morewood; Jacqueline Kelly-Pemberton, Nation River; Lillian Johnston, Winchester Village E; Lorne Finniss, Chesterville Village; Norman Percy-Armstrong, Winchester Township Centre; Steven Summers, Winchester Springs; Laura Marriner, Winchester Village N; Marion Carkner, Winchester Village W; Linda Dumoulin, Hallville; Erma Allison, Inkerman; Mary Vanderlaan, East Mountain Rural; Monique O'Brien, South Mountain; Gloria Summers, Mountain.

South Section

Chairperson - Dorothy Houze, Morrisburg.

Captains - Lila Fawcett, Matilda Township N; Nancy Blokland, Brinston, Dundela & Dixon Corners; Ambert Brown, Iroquois East; Janny Geurkink, Hwy 2 west of Iroquois & the Broken Second; Jean Cherry, Iroquois West; Carol Thompson, Stampville; Margaret Swerdfeger, Haddo, Hainesville, Glen Stewart; Susan Whyte, Lakeshore Drive West; Graham Barkley, Dunbar & Area; Marie Barkley, Glen Becker; Sandra Barnhart, Morrisburg West; Marian Michalicka, Riverside Heights & Froatburn; Sonia Garlough, Williamsburg & Boucks Hill; Sandra McIntosh, Mariatown & Lakeshore Drive East; Sharon Van Allen, Morrisburg East; Barbara Phifer, Elma & Area; Celine Hart, Colquhoun, Hosaic, Archer; Teri Martel, Morrisburg Shopping Centre.

Coming Events

General campaign - February everywhere

Person-to-Person - Campaign canvassers calling door to door during the month of February

Roses for Heart blitzes - January 30 - 31 - Iroquois; Fri., Jan. 31 and Sat., Feb. 1 - in communities across the county

Darts for Heart - Sat., Feb. 15, Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 270, Iroquois. For more information call Reg Farmer 652-2343 or Walter Reid 652-4508

Women, Heart Disease and Stroke Information Session - Mon., Feb. 17 at 7 p.m., Nationview Public School

Dress Red - February 14 businesses and the public will be encouraged to dress RED on St. Valentine's day for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Team coordinators have been assigned to assist in helping to paint Dundas County RED. Have you and your co-workers registered for Dress Red for Heart? If not do so as soon as possible and get in on the fun while supporting a good cause.

Other events - Many other fitness events will take place throughout the year by which the Foundation is able to raise funds for health promotion and research. The cause is one that concerns every member of the community.