

Citizen Advocacy in local community

When a drunk driver speeding through a red light struck the vehicle she was riding in, Nancy Villeneuve went from being a nurse at the Ottawa Civic hospital to being a patient. She spent four months unconscious, and a total of twenty-two months in hospital. Another passenger in the vehicle was killed.

More than a dozen surgeries and 34 years later, Ms. Villeneuve is doing well and proud to have a new friend in fellow Barrhaven resident Elsbeth Fallak.

Ms. Villeneuve and Ms. Fallak met six years ago

through Citizen Advocacy, a United Way agency that matches a volunteer with someone from his or her own community who has a disability and needs practical assistance or simple friendship.

Ms. Villeneuve's accident hasn't hampered her desire to socialize and meet people.

"(Ms. Villeneuve) is always on the go," said Ms. Fallak.

The two women get together four or five times a month for activities they both enjoy, like going for coffee, shopping, outings to CentrepoinTE Theatre, and

teasing each other about their diets.

Learning from each other

Ms. Villeneuve teaches Ms. Fallak new card games, and Ms. Fallak teaches Ms. Villeneuve crochet and knitting stitches. These lessons have resulted in a beautiful afghan for Ms. Villeneuve's son.

Seven years of sharing and visits have built a friendship between them that is tangible and strong.

Getting matched

Ms. Fallak worked at the Royal Bank for many years and is now enjoying retire-

ment. She decided to volunteer with Citizen Advocacy after a guest speaker at the Kiwanianne Club of Rideau meeting explained that people in her own community needed a friend to talk to and take them out.

"I have always enjoyed volunteering and wanted to be a friend to someone with a disability," said Ms. Fallak.

Ms. Fallak and Ms. Villeneuve both enjoy bene-

fits from the match. Ms. Fallak takes Ms. Villeneuve places and asks for Ms. Villeneuve's wisdom when something is on her mind, and Ms. Villeneuve appreciates having a volunteer to take her out.

"It means a lot to me," said Ms. Villeneuve.

Most importantly, they both say they've found friendship.

There is a long list of men and women across Ottawa

waiting for a volunteer, including several in Barrhaven. Chances are Citizen Advocacy knows someone with a disability who shares your interests, and could use some practical assistance or friendship.

If you're interested call Citizen Advocacy at 761-9522 or visit them at www.citizenadvocacy.org.

*By Heather Badenoch,
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