Alzheimer Society

PETERBOROUGH, KAWARTHA LAKES, NORTHUMBERLAND & HALIBURTON

Volunteer Monthly Spotlight

By: Betty Batten, Friendly Visiting and Volunteer Coordinator

When asked why he decided to become a volunteer companion to an Alzheimer Society client, Luis explains that distance restricts his being there for his grandfather who has Alzheimer's disease. "I promised him to do this here in Canada for those who are facing this disease."

An employee of GM Financial, Luis appreciates the company's commitment to community investment. Employees enjoy not only paid work hours for volunteering, but generate an annual donation to their charity for volunteering outside work hours

Sadly, an ongoing scarcity of male volunteers limits the reach of the Society's visiting program. "Uncertainty about what to expect may cause a reluctance to get involved" states Program Coordinator Betty Batten, "but with training, the volunteer can feel comfortable and well prepared". In Luis' words, "training was very helpful".

Just as dementia causes progressive loss of cognitive function and memory, it also robs of independence, social interaction and capacity for once loved activities. Simple daily pleasures previously taken for granted become rare treats – things like no longer enjoying season's tickets to the Pete's games due to lack of transportation and a support companion. Visits of as little as one to two hours per week are times when it feels like "a return to normal", improving mental outlook and quality of life.

It's important to realize that ***Volunteering is a reciprocal relationship and not one sided.*** Tangible benefits exist for both receiver and contributor. For Luis, it's the balance of seeing his client have a good time while he himself learns from his match's wisdom and life experience.

Want to get involved? Contact Betty @ 705-748-5131 or email betty@alzheimerjourney.ca