

Pam's Story:

First Client at Centre is 'All in for Five Counties'



If James Bond is secret agent 007, then Pam has the distinction of being client '001' at Five Counties Children's Centre.

For Pam, all these years later, it's still a license to thrill being recognized as Five Counties' first client in 1974. "Five Counties made me realize I could do things," Pam says. "Kids can come here and feel they have purpose. Five Counties taught me that I could do this, I can stand up.

The people here were able to give me the confidence I needed."

Pam spent many years in broadcasting and is now retired and back at Five Counties as a volunteer. "I'm all in for Five Counties," she notes. Pam's relationship – and story – with the Centre go back to 1974 when she was nine. It was only months after a near-death experience that saw her hit by a bus, resulting in severe, life-long injuries to her right leg. The incident left Pam in a wheelchair for several years, although she was eventually able to get around in a walker and crutches. Today, Pam still wears a brace on her right leg for assistance to walk.

Pam was referred to Five Counties, a fledging organization that had just opened its doors in Peterborough in 1974 to provide treatment for children with physical disabilities. While Pam never came for treatment, she did take part over the next 10 years in the many recreation programs offered by Five Counties at that time. These programs included: swimming, a teen program, Saturday morning program, and a summer day/overnight camp held at Emily Provincial Park called Camp Omigolly designed to give kids with disabilities a chance to experience and discover nature.

Pam's memories of these programs are as vivid and dear to her today as when she attended them years ago. "Camp Omigolly got me out of the house and into society," Pam notes. At Five Counties, Pam also took part in the 'Lumpy Factory,' an arts and crafts program so named because kids would make "lumpy" creations like figures and ornaments out of sour dough that would then be sold providing a taste of how the working world worked.

"Five Counties was the outlet for me to gain confidence and get used to socializing with other children my own age," Pam says. "It helped me so much when I became an adult."

Five Counties has grown considerably in size and scope from its early roots as an organization that primarily helped children with physical disabilities. Today, Five Counties offers therapy and treatment services for thousands of kids and youth with physical, developmental and communication needs to help them build the skills they need to walk, talk and carry out other daily activities. Pam is pleased that as Five Counties has grown, it hasn't lost focus on what matters – helping the kids and youth in its care. "As Five Counties has grown and developed, it's done so much to help kids in our community," she notes.

**Pam knows of what she speaks.
After all, she was the very first one!**

