

ACE IS THE PLACE

My Mother's Schizophrenia: Darlene's Story

Pres. Dave Halikowski: Every holiday season many people discover the miracle of Christmas and each year the British Columbia Schizophrenia Society Prince George Branch sponsors a holiday dinner and dance for the members of the Activity Centre for Empowerment (A.C.E). We are able to do this each year with the help of generous donations from our community. This past year (2015) we sent out a letter to many local businesses and groups requesting donations for this event. For many of the individuals we serve, the dinner, dance and gifts they receive will be the only Christmas celebration they have. This means so much to the people we care about.

It did not take long for the "gift of giving" to touch the hearts of many in our community. We would like to give thanks to all our donors, some of whom include the *Cruisin' Classics* car club; however, this story is about Darlene Thorne, an "angel sent by god." When Darlene (owner of local business the *Nail Cellar*) opened her mailbox and read our request letter, it struck a chord and brought back memories of her own childhood experiences. Darlene's mother, Gina Hinsley, lived with undiagnosed schizophrenia and as a child Darlene experienced many "scary" times not knowing what was wrong. There were many Christmases when she received no presents or Christmas dinner. When Darlene was older she helped her mom find and obtain the necessary supports, and she and Gina were able to have a close relationship until she passed last year.

Darlene immediately identified with the members at ACE and made it

her "purpose" for this Christmas season to make a difference in their lives. In honour of her mother, Darlene started her "Campaign of Giving." Darlene said, "We all know that Christmas is a time for family and friends and more so, a time to reflect on the importance of the true meaning of the holidays, which is to help us slow down and give what we can to others. Its the time of year that reminds us that we can make a bigger difference in someone's life, whether in the form of volunteering or making a donation. It challenges us to find those smaller services that are in need of some extra assistance

to help better the holidays for those who would otherwise remain overlooked." She enlisted the help of her family, friends and extended *Nail Cellar* family and the results were simply amazing. Just 10 days later, Darlene and her daughter Chelsey arrived at A.C.E. with over \$2,000 in cash donations, \$740.00 in gift cards and over \$1,000 worth of other gifts and non-perishable food items.

Our very own Christmas miracle had arrived.

These gifts, along with all the other donations and gifts we had from the generous people of Prince George, made the Christmas Season's celebration for the special people of A.C.E. a miracle to remember. May the spirit of Christmas fill you with joy and happiness throughout the year and always.

"In memory of Gina (Jean) Hinsley who may have had her struggles, but who taught our family so much. Bless you and we miss you everyday! xoxo" **Darlene and Chelsey Thorne**

November 27, 2015



Darlene Thorne: An ACE Christmas Angel and donor star