

Snow shovellers needed across Aurora



By Brock Weir

Chances are when you woke up last Thursday morning to a mountain of snow, you let out a grumble or a few choice words before lacing up, grabbing your shovel, and clearing a path to get out of your driveway.

Spare a thought, however, for the people who might not be able to do it for themselves.

Enter Leslie Gibson.

When Ms. Gibson got ready to start her day after Thursday's snow dumping, it was her first day on the job as a volunteer for Neighbourhood Network's Winter Snow Removal Program. As a first time volunteer, last week's weather might have been a trial by fire but it didn't dampen her enthusiasm.

The challenge, however, was digging herself out of her own house to get to the local senior with whom the Aurora-based volunteer service paired her.

?I was getting worried this person was waiting on me to come and do their walk and everything because we couldn't get out of our own driveway as our road hadn't been plowed,? Ms. Gibson explains. ?I didn't get there until 7 p.m. that night, but the gentleman had nice neighbours who did his porch and some of the sidewalks, so I was able to clear off the end of the driveway after the snow plows went by.



Leslie Gibson

?This is better than going to the gym! It is good exercise, it is nice to be outside and meet another member of the community. If you want to go and chat with the person you are helping out, you can meet somebody new. It is a combination that leaves you feeling good, you're helping somebody while enjoying the outdoors and getting a little exercise.?

It is a ringing endorsement of the program, and one Neighbourhood Network is trying to get out as winter rapidly approaches.

Their Winter Snow Removal Program matches volunteer snow shovellers with registered clients, notably seniors and persons with disabilities, who live close by, in Aurora, Newmarket and East Gwillimbury.

Matched volunteers are expected to clear snow within 24 hours after snowfalls exceed 10 centimetres, including snow from municipal sidewalks, a path to their front doors, and that pesky heap of snow that winds up at the end of driveways after the snow plows go by.

In Aurora, Neighbourhood Network says this need is a particularly urgent one as there is a particular lack of ?repeat? snow shovellers from last year, and new clients coming on board for service.

?We have been going to all high schools in the area for volunteer fairs and making presentations in classrooms mainly for the Grade 9s and 10s who are just starting to learn about mandatory community service hours,? says Maggie of Neighbourhood Network. ?We do notice a lot of Aurora areas are lacking. A lot of people are in need.

?Volunteers can get up to their full 40 hours in one winter as our winter season is quite long. The reward for the volunteer would not only be collecting their hours but helping somebody in need and feeling good about themselves.?

For more information on the program, call 905-726-3737 or email info@neighbourhoodnetwork.org.