**More than just man’s best friend**

**Work with dog guides, myriad of other charities, nets Pat Jaskula the Paul Harris Award**

*Grimsby Lincoln News*

*Pat Jaskula, co-owner of the Canadian Tire in Grimsby, was named a Paul Harris award winner by Rotary at Noon. The award is given to community members who give back in a significant way to charity. Jaskula supports many worthy causes, among them the Purina Walk for Dog Guides, which is set to take place on May 25.*

GRIMSBY – For Pat Jaskula it all started as a way to cope with the loss of her two pet dogs.

Five years ago the co-owner of the Grimsby Canadian Tire needed something to fill the void after her two pets died. And it was local resident Steve McDonnell who gave her the inspiration to get involved with dog guides.

“He’s just the most amazing man,” Jaskula said of McDonnell.

McDonnell, well known in the community for his work preparing dog guides, would often come into the Canadian Tire store in order to get the young dogs acclimated to people and the public.

“I thought, I have to put this energy someplace,” she said.

A short while later she had raised enough money, $20,000 with the help of the Jumpstart program, to have a dog trained to help an autistic child in Okatakes, Alb. Jaskula went to the dog’s graduation ceremony, when it was handed off to the mother of the autistic child.

“It’s heartwarming,” she said about the graduation. “When you see the people who are receiving the dogs, you know it’s important to do what you do.”

From there, Jaskula and a few committee volunteers, including McDonnell, helped revive the local walk for dog guides. The Lions club had previously organized the walk, but that fell by the wayside as the Lions members retired.

And it was that commitment to dog guides, as well as the litany of other groups and charities Jaskula supports, that netted her the Paul Harris Award from Rotary at Noon. Rotary clubs hand out the award to residents who give back to charities in a meaningful and substantial way.

Now, with preparations underway for the fourth annual walk since Jaskula and company revived it, organizers are looking to once again grow what is already an impressive event.

Last year the Grimsby walk finished 11th among the 202 that took place throughout the country, raising $12,000 locally. That placed them among cities like Kitchener-Waterloo, Oakville, and Calgary. This year the goal is $15,000.

“What they (the dogs) can do amazes me,” said Jaskula.

The dogs aren’t just for the visually impaired. People with hearing or visual impairments, special needs such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism or even diabetes can utilize dog guides.

Diabetes alert dogs are the latest advancement.

“They wake them (the patient) when the smell that their sugars are low,” she said.

The Grimsby walk takes place May 25. It starts outside the Canadian Tire plaza on Livingston Ave. with registration at 12 p.m. and the walk at 1 p.m. There’s a short circuit and a long circuit for walkers. Once they return there will be a barbecue, prizes and raffles.

To get involved, visit www.purinawalkfordogguides.com, and search for the Grimsby walk. You don’t have to participate to donate, and can also stop by the day of the walk to donate.

Despite her passion for dog guides, Jaskula supports a wide variety of groups. That includes Big Brother Big Sisters, the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, Fire Department, YMCA, Grimsby Benevolent Fund, McNally House, local school fundraisers, sports teams and the list goes on.

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Awards handed out May 29

For those who want to help honour Jaskula for her Paul Harris Award win, or who just want to have a nice evening, can come out to the presentation on May 29.

The event takes place at Peninsula Ridge Estates Winery and gets underway at 7 p.m. It features wine and cheese and will take place in the coach house.

Tickets are $25 apiece and can be purchased by calling Carolyn Webb at 905-945-7039. Rotary at Noon also encourages all former Paul Harris Award winners to come out and share in the celebration.