

## Spotlight on Volunteers

### Jocelyne Okens

Jocelyne Okens, who has volunteered at Compassion Society since October 2016, is a “people person” who all her life has found ways to help others. She was the oldest in a family of 14 children from a village in north-western Quebec, where her parents owned two general stores where she worked while growing up.



Jocelyne Okens with her husband, Peter (far left), her daughter, Nina, and her son, Patrick

Jocelyne moved to Montreal, where she worked for five years in a hospital and was an usherette at Montreal Expos baseball games. From there she moved to Toronto, and while taking ESL classes she fell in love with a fellow student, Peter Okens, who had recently immigrated from Germany, so Jocelyne quickly learned German as well as English! She and Peter were married in 1971 and soon moved to Sao Paulo, Brazil, where Jocelyne learned her fourth language, Portuguese, and had her first child, Patrick.

After three and a half years in Brazil they moved to Montreal, where their daughter, Nina, was born. Soon after this, they moved to Burlington when Peter secured work in Hamilton. Four years later, in 1979, they bought the house in this city where she and Peter still live nearly 40 years later. As the children were growing up, Jocelyne purposely spoke to them in French, and Peter talked to them in German, so that their children are tri-lingual.

In Burlington Jocelyne worked twelve years as an Educational Assistant at French schools. She also volunteered at Cogeco, reading stories in French on TV and interviewing people from the local French community. For fifteen years she was a volunteer visitor of widows and of people who are mentally or physically challenged and who need someone to take the time to listen to them.

Jocelyne’s hobbies include knitting, photography, and painting. As an active volunteer she has given her time to many various charities and organizations. She “loves” working at Compassion Society, where she “feels useful.” She is creative in the way she relates to clients she meets here and sometimes gets together with them at Tim Hortons. She has also obtained space at one of the city’s Community Gardens, and hopes to find clients who will share tending the garden and enjoying its produce. In these and other ways she makes Compassion Society more welcoming to those we serve.