

The Spirit of Volunteerism

Looking back, it was a momentous occasion – even if the members of the newly formed Kitchener-Waterloo Rotary Club didn’t realize it.

The year was 1922 and the club had just heard a proposal from Alec Martin to help children with special needs. As one of the founding members of the Ontario Society for Crippled Children, Alec was concerned about their welfare. On December 18, the club formally agreed that they would “make the care and treatment of crippled children its major activity of service.”

A Crippled Children’s Committee was created with Alec as the first chairman. Clinics were established at local hospitals and services were provided. As for Alec, he was the driving force on the committee for six years before he relinquished his role.

The Martin family’s involvement with children with special needs didn’t end there. In 1977, Alec’s son John became the president of the Kitchener-Waterloo Rotary Club – and the president of the K-W Rotary Children’s Centre (a facility that was constructed back in 1957 due to the ever-expanding needs of the community). When a decision was made to create a Foundation to focus exclusively on raising funds for the Centre, John became its first president in 1990 and remained at the helm until 1995.

Inspired by their father, John, and grandfather Alec, brothers David and Jamie Martin volunteered their services to help children in need. David joined the KidsAbility Foundation Board in 2000. He quickly became the Investment Chair and made a significant contribution to the sound financial practices of the Foundation until he stepped down in 2007. Jamie became a member of the Kitchener Rotary Club and served on the Regional Easter Seals Committee for over a decade.

For the Martins, supporting the community was a way of life and something they embraced wholeheartedly. “The very concept of giving back to our community was very important to us,” explains David. “In fact, volunteerism was something that was nurtured throughout our family.”

Fortunately for KidsAbility, the spirit of volunteerism ran deep through three generations of the Martin family – without whom there might not be a KidsAbility today!



Martin Family

Rotarians, Donors and Volunteers