



L: Demonstrating a “foot roller” – a special device that allows a patient to exercise the knees and keep them flexible without having to put any weight on them. Simple but ingenious, it helps promote healing when a patient truly needs it.

R: Ken Stewart with just some of the wide range of medical equipment available to be loaned to people in the greater Gananoque area.



GANANOQUE LOAN CUPBOARD BRIGHTENS LIVES YEAR ROUND

By Lorraine Payette

For years, the people of Gananoque have been able to rely on Ken Stewart to help them out in times of emergency. Whether suffering from a broken leg, hip replacement, or other condition requiring short term use of specialized mobility equipment, or if there are people coming in from another area who need the use of items for a few days or weeks, just talk to him. He'll see to it that you have the loan of whatever you need, from wheelchairs and walkers through commodes and hospital beds.

As long as you return it, it won't cost a cent.

Stewart is in charge of the Gananoque Loan Cupboard, collecting and distributing all kinds of care equipment for those who need it. Supplies and equipment are donated by numerous local agencies and businesses, and others are second hand and brought in by those who no longer need them. About

90 per cent of their available equipment has been donated.

“Costs can be very high,” said Stewart. “A pair of batteries for an electric scooter can run \$500. Local organizations have helped us with cash donations that keep these running.”

“A few years ago, someone called. She had received a new electric lift chair with no batteries that she wanted to donate. Since then, she injured herself and needed it back. We were more than happy to do that for her.”

The project started back in the 1970s when they were working with the Red Cross Loan Cupboard. Carveth also had a service. Stewart gradually took it over and has been working at it ever since.

There is no time limit on the use of loaned material. Items like beds and wheelchairs can stay out on loan for years. When people are limited for funds, the Loan Cupboard can help them get the equipment they need for the length of time they need it.

Over time the Loan Cupboard has been in a number of locations as buildings were sold or repurposed.

“We met with Town Council and explained our need for a permanent location,” said Stewart. “They came up with a grant where they provided two 40' trailers placed on Town property at 665 Charles Street and we've worked hand-in-hand to help each other out. We have also been blessed with Dan Hicks of Eastern Marine, who has provided us with a spot that is properly ventilated and can handle large items. This way we can avoid mildew and other problems to keep everything at the best possible quality.”

Although much of the equipment is donated, what has to be purchased is expensive, and everything must be maintained and bills need to be paid.

“People come from Seeley's Bay, Athens, Lansdowne, all over, to help and to donate,” said Stewart. “They know they can come here in a time of need to get whatever we have to make it better.”

The regular volunteers, people who will be there whenever help is required, make a lot of difference. Whether it's something simple, like tightening a bolt or replacing a mattress or cushion, on up to complex repairs to motors, wiring, or even structural inspections to make sure that everything is safe and working properly, these are the people who know how to perform these tasks and are very much in demand and appreciated.

Many who benefit from the use of Loan Cupboard equipment go on to become donors and volunteers. Stewart is always amazed and grateful for the response.

“At this time of year, I especially want to say thank you,” he said. “We all benefit when we work together.” **LH**

For more information on borrowing, donating, volunteering, etc., please Call 613-382-7601.