

## **GRATITUDE & RETIREMENT TRIBUTE** - Evelyn St. Pierre – May 2019

Evelyn, I was initially hesitant & yet delighted when Lynn O'Brien invited me to say a few words about you. Hesitant because YOU deserve the best, and so I in turn went to the Best, our 2<sup>nd</sup> floor friends, Motherhouse sisters, nursing staff, volunteers, & our priest chaplains. They extend to you their love, prayers, thoughts and gratitude, and shared with me their experience of you.

First of all some background information - When Sister Josie told me that you were retiring my immediate response was 'I am so sorry' for us the Motherhouse Congregational Family but I am happy for Evelyn.

I shared that I experienced Evelyn as 'the Gatekeeper' at the Motherhouse. A wise person here with us today stated that the first impression, that first experience we have of an organization and in our case the Motherhouse takes place at the point of entry – be it the telephone, or the door. It is at this entry point that we determine how it is WE will be welcomed, or NOT!

To be in the Motherhouse lobby and witness Evelyn and her colleagues negotiate who is coming in, what they are bringing, who it is they need to see or meet, all the while excusing themselves as they answer the phone, check for drivers, ensuring that sisters get to and from appointments with their assigned drivers. Welcoming the mail courier, attempting to distract a sister who is exit seeking, calling 2<sup>nd</sup> floor requesting support, welcoming and providing Morgan Clinic clients direction, welcoming volunteers and palliative care clients, welcoming and providing direction to persons attending Motherhouse workshops, retreats as well as providing direction to visitors, to say nothing of responding to the fire drills, and the frantic phone calls from a sister enquiring if that were a bell she heard, what was it for, ensuring that 'gift case' items are replenished, displayed and sold, and those ever so popular 50 50 tickets – the

switchboard bookie busy ensuring requests for tickets are honoured, the duty list goes on and on. It is said that it is the 'small' gestures that make the difference in the life of each one of us both the giver and the receiver! You Evelyn made a difference.

It is not easy keeping track of 'who is on first and who is on 2<sup>nd</sup>' – but somehow you wonderful switchboard operators, 'Women' Gatekeepers –manage to do it 24/7. It is all about the power of the relationship! The integrity and respect you have for each sister who call this place 'home' and for 'all' who work and visit the Motherhouse.

Unfortunately for some of our sisters that taken for granted experience of placing a phone call to a loved one is no longer an easy task, and time and time again you kindly & patiently remind the sister that 'together' you will make this connection happen.

Evelyn, we want to thank you for the grace, compassion and respect offered when we as a congregation say our 'final' goodbye to our sisters, those gestures do not go unnoticed.

Conversely it is the warmth and JOY that is extended at the front door welcoming HOME a sister, moving van and all, alerting the appropriate departments that the 'new arrival' is here!

Evelyn you said it so well last Thursday, when you provided everyone at the Motherhouse with delicious homemade baking at the monthly birthday celebration – when you stated 'this is family'. This is what it is all about – I love the sisters they are family!

We in turn the Motherhouse 'family', wish you well deserved leisure time for YOUR family; those special grandchildren you and Michel so enjoy having fun and being with, your garden, walks, baking, preserving, touring and when you are renewed and considering the next chapter in your life journey you may even consider a volunteer connection!

The writer, John O'Donohue, in his book 'To Bless the Space Between Us' says it best, and I quote:

Evelyn, this is where your life has arrived,  
After all the years of effort and toil;  
Look back with graciousness and thanks  
On all of your great and quiet achievements.

You stand on the shore of a new invitation  
To open your life to what is left undone,  
Let your heart enjoy a different rhythm  
Have the courage for a new approach to time,  
Allow it to slow YOU until you find freedom  
To draw alongside the mystery you hold.

Now is the time to enjoy Your heart's desire  
To live the dreams you've waited for,  
To awaken the depths beyond your work  
Evelyn, enter into that freedom space – you are so deserving.

“God Bless you. We love you. Happy Retirement Evelyn.”

Written & Presented by – Aileen Cassidy, csj,

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