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This is the 10th installment of a series, prompted by stories that have appeared in The News, celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Multi-Service Centre (MSC).

October is Community Support Services Month. At the MSC, these are the basket of services that have been known as Home Support Services (HSS) since 1978.

In the 1970's, Gerry Livingston had a dream of providing a transportation service for seniors who needed it for shopping or other appointments. He asked some members of the founding MSC board to do some research but the licensing, insurance, & driver costs made the development of such a service unrealistic at the time. It did, however, make Mr. Livingston aware of the long range plans of those early board members. So, in many ways, HSS was founded on one of Gerry Livingston's intuitions around a community need. Mr. Livingston ultimately offered the former Livingston family residence on 185 Rolph Street as the MSC's initial office and meeting space.

The first actual HSS program started with a service, Home Help, begun through the federal Canada Manpower offices at the time. This programming was transferred to the MSC location in October of 1978. Initial programming included household and outdoor related services (house cleaning, snow removal, some limited transportation), which were delivered by 5 field staff under the supervision of coordinators Myra Pennington and Don Fairall. The first photo of Myrna and Don at work appeared in a July 1979 edition of *The Tillsonburg News*.

Programs were added to the department as need and finances allowed. Home Support today includes a wide range of programming. Personal Support, the Homemaking & Errands Service and Home/Yard Maintenance & Repair all evolved from the first Home Help program. The "official" MSC Transportation program began in 1981. Meals on Wheels was 'inherited' from the Kinette Club in 1982 and the first Assisted Living programming began in 1997. Foot Care services started in 2004 and Hand Care/Manicure Services were first offered last year. The newest programs, funded under the Aging at Home Strategy (and profiled in *The Tillsonburg News* on September 22) began in August, 2008. They are Home at Last (HAL), which helps seniors get home safely from hospital visits and Assisted Living in the Community (ALCom), which provides a possible alternative to nursing home care. Both are offered at no cost to the client.

MSC programming in Home Support was not developed in a vacuum. The Senior Citizens Advisory Council, lead by Muriel Bissett and profiled in the March 20, 1981 edition of the *News* was a long time tenant of the house on Rolph Street and provided much valuable advice. One of the many research projects conducted by the MSC over the years, the Seniors Outreach Service (SOS), featured in the June 22, 1984 *News*, resulted in several Home Support programs expanding into the rural areas around Tillsonburg in 1984/85. More recently, Home Support personnel have been involved in Client Directed Care research with the South West CCAC and Pandemic Planning preparedness with the Board of Health.

Along the way, the MSC also became involved in the training of personnel in this growing sector, in courses like health care aide and personal support worker certification. The August 21, 1992 *News* contained a photo of the first Health Care Aide program offered by the MSC in partnership with Fanshawe College.

A dynamic combination of office staff, Community Workers and volunteers keep HSS programs alive today in the community. Last year alone, 8,666 hours of volunteer service provided by 98 individuals and 8 corporate teams ensured seniors got the meals they needed and were driven to the appointments that allow them to stay in their home communities. Over time, some volunteers have even become clients!

The Home Support Services department has been accredited, through Accreditation Canada, since 2003. (2010 note: The current program coordinator is Diana Handsaeme)

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