

Remember: You can live well with osteoporosis!

Eleanor Mills' Boney Express – A Legacy and an Inspiration

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COPING Archives

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Event calendar

Building Bones
London, Ontario
26-May-2012

Osteo.....what?
Mississauga, Ontario
30-May-2012

**2nd Annual National
Capital Bone and Joint
Health Day**
Ottawa, Ontario
01-Jun-2012

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On a cloudy and chilly Mother's Day morning in 1993, Eleanor Mills set out from Victoria, B.C. guiding her walker-chair on the first of the five kilometre walks that would be the signature of her visits to 90 communities across Canada. The final destination for Eleanor and her Boney Express? Saint John's, Newfoundland, two years and more than 7200 kilometres away.

What could possibly motivate anyone to take on such a monumental task? - an equally enormous determination to prove to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians affected by osteoporosis that it is possible to overcome the pain, discomfort and loss of mobility that so many experience as a result of this devastating disease.

"Osteoporosis has relentlessly pursued and disabled women and men for centuries," said Eleanor, then 79. "Now that early diagnosis and preventive measures are available, it is our duty to get 'out there' and spread the news. We need to let people know about this disease before they have a fracture as I have had."

Eleanor realized she had a serious problem in the late 1970s when she noticed that the hem of her calf-length dress had suddenly reached her ankles. "That afternoon, I'd heard a very unusual crushing sound and felt a

vibration as I awkwardly held onto some heavy grocery bags and tried to open the door to my home," she said. "The instant height loss was inexplicable. It was only later that I realized the sound I'd heard was the crushing of my spine. At the time there was no pain. That was to come later."

Fifteen years later, after Eleanor had been involved in an experimental exercise program for osteoporosis sufferers at Women's College Hospital in Toronto and had acquired a wheeled walker, a Sunday afternoon stroll inspired Eleanor to undertake a cross-country walk. "I got in touch with others I knew in the osteoporosis field and then I started training."



Eleanor Mills and Mona Colicos

Honouring our Volunteers with the Eleanor Mills Inspiration Award

The Eleanor Mills Inspiration Award honours those special Osteoporosis Canada volunteers who, like Eleanor, have embraced their own osteoporosis, and by doing so have inspired others with their determination, perseverance and optimism, and have given of themselves to champion the osteoporosis cause. Past recipients of this prestigious award include:

2011

Elda Clarke,
Saskatoon Chapter

2009

Marg MacDonell,
Chair, COPN

2007

Christine Thomas,
Ottawa Chapter

2006

Gail Lemieux,
COPN

2005

Priscilla Cole,
COPN

Beginning with those first steps in Victoria, Eleanor and her Boney Express spent two summers joining walkers in communities across Canada. Lauding the many volunteers who supported the walk in each community, she said, "Those who helped me were simply splendid. They cannot be praised eloquently enough for helping me - a woman they had never heard of, and never met."

Eleanor's mission did not end with the walk. For another decade she inspired countless thousands as the patron of the Osteoporosis Society of Canada, regularly attending national board meetings and special Society events and always encouraging all those affected by osteoporosis to "Never give up!"

Eleanor Mills, Patron of Osteoporosis Canada, passed away at her home in Toronto on October 5, 2004. In commemoration of her remarkable contributions to the organization, each year Osteoporosis Canada bestows its highest award – The Eleanor Mills Inspiration Award - to the volunteer who, like Eleanor, has embraced his or her own osteoporosis, and by doing so, has inspired others with his or her determination, perseverance and optimism

Her Legacy Lives on in Our Staff and Volunteers

Eleanor Mills touched the lives of so many Canadians, none more so than the staff and volunteers who participated in the original Boney Express. Two of those individuals share stories of the impact Eleanor had on their lives.

Lorell Thoms – "I was a 22-year-old university student when Eleanor's Boney Express walked into my life. For four months I lifted, directed, and organized the women of the Boney Express. We laughed, learned, and experienced Canada together. Forever inspired by that experience I am still working to this day with Osteoporosis Canada as the Alberta Chapter's Educator, doing my best to inform, educate and support those affected by osteoporosis."

Judy Cline – "I was an active physiotherapist when I became involved with the Boney Express through a young friend (an Olympic rower) who was the co-chair of the walk. Eleanor was engaging, determined and moved like lightning with her walker. We hosted three more walks in St. Catharines, with Eleanor joining us a second time.

Eleanor achieved her aim of spreading the news about osteoporosis and its often devastating effects. As a healthcare practitioner then and now in retirement, I am impressed with the difference in both public and healthcare professional awareness of osteoporosis. Eleanor was the catalyst in making that difference. My involvement with osteoporosis continues today, as chair of the Niagara Chapter."

FRACTURE FACT: Osteoporosis is a condition that causes bones to become thin and porous, decreasing bone strength and leading to increased risk of breaking a bone.

**UPCOMING VIRTUAL EDUCATION FORUM:
Cracking the code: Using food labels to improve your bone health
Thursday, May 17, 2012**



On Thursday, May 17, 2012, Michelle Ellis, RD will be presenting on the topic of nutrition. The virtual forum titled *Cracking the code: Using food labels to improve your bone health* will discuss nutritional requirements of calcium and vitamin D for bone health, provide a review of nutrition labels including nutrition claims, ingredient lists and the nutrition facts table. The presentation will also provide practical examples of how nutrition labels can help us improve the quality of the food we eat. Join us through the comfort of your own computer and log in on the day of the event and have your questions answered in real time. [Read more.](#)

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FUNNY BONE:

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