

GAIL BELCHER

1944 - 2019

Gail was born April 22, 1944, and grew up in Toronto. At the age of 18, she became a nursing student at Wellesley College Hospital; her Class of '65 was a strong group of women who shaped nursing in the years to come.

In the 1960s, Gail was known for her hand-sewn mini-dresses and incredible fashion sense. While her children were young, Gail stayed at home and baked magical birthday cakes, created imaginative parties and games, and taught them to love learning and creating. Once they were in school, she went to the University of Toronto, earning her Bachelor of Science degree and began a career in nursing education and child and youth psychiatry in both Toronto and later Vancouver.

After retirement, Gail went to Sri Lanka with Rose Charities Canada to help children recover from the trauma of the tsunami. This was the beginning of her career in volunteer work.

Diagnosed with breast cancer 13 years ago, Gail surrounded herself with those who could support her already positive outlook. Gail paddled with our Abreast Up The Creek crew in 2010/2011 and also served on our Board of Directors. Gail was active even in her illness, going for drives along the beach, and visiting the movie theatre, and her illness really only caught up to her in the last few weeks of her life.

The professionals who Gail met through her experiences with cancer were a very important part of her life. The women at the non-profit Callanish Society introduced her to writing, and she began to write of angels. Co-founder of Callanish, Janie said, "*We can make our lives and our deaths matter by the compassionate ways we care for ourselves and one another.*" Gail would have taken that message to heart, and could be seen to demonstrate that in her approach to those around her.