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For Immediate Release

**WOMEN'S PLACE VOLUNTEER INSPIRES \$10,000 DONATION
TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS BY GIVING THE GIFT OF LIFE**

NIAGARA FALLS, ON, June 19, 2017 – Sometimes, the impact of one selfless act can ripple outward in unexpected ways. This is something that Peter Hetherington, a Women's Place volunteer and Niagara Falls resident, recently proved when his act of kindness inspired another local resident to donate \$10,000 to Women's Place.

In January, 2017, Peter donated part of his liver to Sonya Carrie. Sonya's generous donation to Women's Place was her way of "paying it forward" by supporting a cause that Peter has been passionately donating his time to since 2015. The generosity of both Peter and Sonya is literally changing and saving lives.

Even before receiving a diagnosis of neuroendocrine tumours and carcinoid syndrome in March of 2015, Sonya, now 22, was experiencing symptoms that impacted everything from her ability to work, study and travel. When medication failed to give her relief, Sonya requested a referral to a doctor on the transplant team at Toronto General Hospital. He deemed Sonya to be a potential candidate and suggested to her that she get on the liver donation waiting list. While it was not guaranteed that the transplant would relieve her symptoms, it was a risk she was willing to take. The alternative was remaining a prisoner in her own house and watching her health further decline, as her body started "hating everything" as it increasingly went into crisis, triggered by foods and other aspects of her environment.

Not long before Sonya put her name on the donor list, Peter retired. Having the time to recover from surgery without having to take time off work, he revisited an idea that had sparked his

interest over 20 years earlier: becoming a live organ donor. As fate would have it, around the same time, Peter's church circulated information about Sonya's search for a live liver donor. Peter saw his opportunity. He made contact with the University Health Network and after numerous tests, they decided he would be an appropriate match for the transplant.

With the transplant complete in January of this year, Sonya's body responded immediately. "My symptoms were completely gone when I woke up from surgery," says Sonya. "I was laughing. I was smiling. I was arguing like my old self. It's a miracle. I am so thankful that Pete, my living donor, answered my prayers. He stepped in and saved me."

In return, she is saving others.

By donating \$10,000 of an inheritance from her grandfather (the balance of which is being held in trust until she is 25), Sonya will be giving women and children across Niagara the gift of shelter, counselling and other services to help them deal with the difficult issues of dating and domestic violence. In some situations, these services can literally save lives.

The staff of Women's Place are not surprised that Peter was the inspiration for this donation. "Pete is a deeply religious person and we often joke that if he doesn't make it into heaven, we can't figure out who might qualify," jokes Community Engagement Manager, Jennifer McQuestion, who oversees the agency's volunteer program. "We are so lucky to have him advocating for Women's Place and representing this agency. He has a deep interest in people and his community and just wants to help in any way he can. I can't think of a more generous person." In addition to volunteering for Women's Place, he has also donated his time to other organizations at home and abroad, including distributing donations for *Operation Christmas Child* to children in Mexico, and returning many times to help at an orphanage in Haiti.

Both Peter and Sonya hope that the ripple effect continues. They encourage others to consider becoming live donors and to contribute to the life-changing efforts of Women's Place. For more information on how to help, visit www.uhn.ca/MOT and www.womensplacesn.org

For additional information about Women's Place or to coordinate an interview with Peter and Sonya, please contact Amanda Braet, 905-356-3933 ext. 240, amanda@wpsn.ca.

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