

CARRYING THE TORCH

By Neil Starkie

This post is dedicated to the memory of Joy Coleman, founder of The Spiers Centre, who passed away recently. Joy's life and legacy continue to inspire all of us who follow in her footsteps.

Sometimes words are not enough to capture the life of a person who was the embodiment of her name. Joy Coleman lived a life that radiated purpose, compassion, and community.

Back in March, I wrote a blog titled "The True Joy in Life", inspired by George Bernard Shaw's words and by Joy herself, who joined us as our guest of honour at our International Women's Day celebration. At the time, I reflected on how Joy embodied Shaw's description of a "*force of nature*". Now, in the wake of her passing, those reflections feel all the more profound.

At that celebration, Joy was exactly where she belonged, in the place she created and being celebrated as an inspirational woman who has shaped lives and built communities. Sitting with her, sharing ideas and hopes for the future, I was struck by how her passion remained as strong as ever.

Since joining The Spiers Centre eight months ago, I have heard countless stories about Joy. They all carry the same truth: she created community where none existed, sustained it through hardship, and gave of herself without reservation. Her legacy is not only the Centre she founded, but the lives she touched, the families she uplifted, and the spirit of kindness she modelled for us all.



Shaw also wrote of life as a "splendid torch" to be held high before being passed on. That is exactly what Joy did. And now it is our turn. Her flame burns in the Centre she established, in the people who continue her work, and in the community that gathers strength from her vision.

It is my honour to continue carrying that torch. I cannot promise to match her force of nature, but I can promise that I will do all I can to keep it burning as brightly as possible until the time comes to hand it on to the next generation.

This post stands as our final public farewell to Joy. While we will continue to honour her daily through our work and commitment to the community she built, this is our last tribute to her as our founder, mentor, and friend. From here, the best way we can honour Joy is by ensuring her light continues to shine in all that we do.

Thank you, Joy—for the community you built, the example you set, and the true Joy in life you gave us all.