



For Immediate Release

Monday, May 28, 2007

OBITUARY:

Les Chater, YMCA philanthropist passes away at age 97

Hamilton, ON – The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington is saddened to announce the death of 85 year member and generous donor, Les Chater, on Saturday at the age of 97.

Les Chater's involvement with the YMCA began in 1919 at the age of 10. Over the past several decades Les has become a major supporter of the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington.

Les always enjoyed sharing the impact that the YMCA has had on his life and took every opportunity to encourage others to support the YMCA. He held a special place in his heart for children who cannot afford access to YMCA programs, having been there as a child himself. Les would speak to youth about his life experiences and the importance of staying fit in spirit, mind and body. In 2003 he provided the financial resources for the first annual YMCA Leader Corps conference at YMCA Wanakita, attended by more than 150 YMCA youths from across Southern Ontario.

In 1999, when the need arose, Les Chater made the \$1 million leadership gift to the YMCA capital campaign, responsible for building the Flamborough Family YMCA and revitalization of the Ron Edwards Family YMCA in Burlington.

In 2004, as plans progressed for the new YMCA on Hamilton Mountain, Les once again showed his unfailing support and pledged \$1 million towards this new facility. In a unanimous decision, the YMCA Board of Directors chose to name the new facility the Les Chater Family YMCA in honour of Les' exemplary generosity, spirit and leadership to the YMCA Movement. That same year Les was appointed to the YMCA Canada Fellowship of Honour, the highest honour bestowed in the YMCA.

During the Second World War, Les served as an Officer with the RAF. He was taken custody by the Japanese and was held as a POW in a Japanese Camp for four years. While many in the camp perished, Les credits his survival, strength and leadership of this horrible experience to his early involvement in the YMCA. "The YMCA instilled in me the strength to survive each day," says Les. At the age of 90, Les published his diaries that he had secretly written in captivity as a POW, in the book *Behind the Fence: Life as POW in Japan*.

“Les Chater was an exemplary member and ambassador of the YMCA and an inspiration to all who know him. His boundless determination to give back to the community has been a model of YMCA values throughout his 97 years. He will be sadly missed by our YMCA family. His unfailing support and love for his community is left behind as a beautiful legacy to our community with the building and opening of the Les Chater Family YMCA,” says Jim Commerford, President & CEO of the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington.

Les is predeceased by wife, Muriel and will be sadly missed by son, Michael.

- 30 -

For information, contact:

Jim Commerford, President & CEO

Phone: 905-317-4919

Cell: 289-260-7503

jim_commerford@ymca.ca