As Bonny Lea Farm Says Farewell to its Founder, Her Legacy will Live On

**CHESTER – December 10, 2015** – With sadness Bonny Lea Farm and the South Shore Community Service Association mark the passing of its Board President and Founder, Dr. Alberta “Bertie” Pew Baker.

“Her legacy of wisdom and perseverance will long serve our work to sustain Bonny Lea Farm in our service to people who live daily with the challenge of a disability,” David Outhouse, Managing Director South Shore Community Service Association.

Back in 1973, a group of people gathered for dinner. Afterward their discussion turned to the needs of residents of Chester living with disabilities and what could be done for them. At that time, the province had nothing to offer them. The school system had no place for them. Usually the families looked after them. Where that was not possible they became wards of the government. For many of them, life could have a richer dimension but the means did not exist to make it possible. What started as an after-dinner conversation lasted far into the night. A challenge was identified. Enthusiasm mounted and, before the guests departed for their various homes, a dream had been born.

That dream of over 40 years ago has realized a different reality for today. At the time there was no model to work from, no prototype, no curriculum. The founders developed a philosophy: That every person who attended Bonny Lea Farm should be supported to reach their potential. Each individual would have a program developed to meet their needs to challenge them to the utmost of their abilities with encouragement, support and the expectation of success in developing skills and finding personal dignity and worth through productive living. This is still the model in use at Bonny Lea Farm more than 40 years later. The results are measured in the smiles on the faces of the more than 40 “guys and gals” who live and work there today.

“I will remember Bertie as a loving mother and always a fierce advocate on behalf of her children. Some forty years ago, when she opened her arms to embrace our Bonny Lea family as her own, we reaped the benefits of that same love and advocacy. We shall continue to value and to protect her legacy of love and support and encouragement for all within our walls,” Mary Ellen Clancey, Board Chair.

The South Shore Community Service Association has grown beyond its original goal of creating Bonny Lea Farm as a nurturing environment for people with disabilities to blossom. Also under its umbrella are the South Shore Work Activity Program, which provides transition to employment and job readiness skills development and training; the Chester Career Resource Centre, which provides job search supports to the residents of the Municipality; Community Journey program aiding people in building life skills to gain independence; and it has been fertile ground for the Community Wheels program to grow, providing a necessary service in ensuring people living in the Municipality of Chester have the ability to get where they need to go, when they need to go.

“It's now up to us to continue her legacy.  We need to carry on in her memory for the participants and vision Bertie made a wonderful reality.” John Biebesheimer, Board Member.

She, along with her late husband Dr. David W Baker have left a living legacy here at Bonny Lea Farm and South Shore Community Service Association. Her vision and dedication will not be forgotten.