

TORONTO, ON – March 12th, 2021

There's something about Mary.

Mary Sticca, that is. Today, March 12th, 2021, marks the conclusion of a tremendous daily email campaign over the last 12 months which served to celebrate the sport of lacrosse and maintain connections with its passionate membership during the global COVID-19 pandemic. When the world first came to a pause at this time last year, Mary committed herself to a “21-day challenge;” to keep the positive energy and momentum that had been built through spring registrations, club TRY Lacrosse sessions, and the Ontario Lacrosse Semi-Annual General Meeting workshops going strong. As the reality of the pandemic became apparent and the civil lockdown was extended monthly, Mary expanded both her content (which had largely been focused on local lacrosse stories in those first days) and her audience. What began as a three week feel-good exercise among a small circle of Ontario Lacrosse enthusiasts quickly morphed into a dedicated email chain that spread far and wide, and sustained themselves over the course of the past year.

“Mary’s nightly email campaign, entitled *365 Days of Lacrosse*, contained a wealth of quality information about the sport of lacrosse. Her focus was broad; she shared interesting stories about women’s lacrosse, men’s lacrosse. She detailed the accomplishments and struggles of individuals and programs here in Ontario, and throughout the world. She reached back on historic records and also highlighted the current ways that lacrosse players were staying connected to their sticks and their teammates. She celebrated people and their love for the game. She was inclusive, she was complete. But most importantly, she gave people hope that lacrosse, the game we all know and love, will return,” remarked Jim Bomhof, President of the Ontario Lacrosse Association. “Her emails brought joy and positivity to people’s inboxes at a time when it was needed most, and we thank her sincerely for her outstanding grassroots contribution to the game.”

So who is Mary Margaret (*Patterson*) Sticca? Mary was born to prominent Niagara fruit farmers, Lorne and Lorena Patterson. They lived, away from the farm, in a house on the corner of Mary Street and Highway 55 in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario. Mary lived there with her parents and two sisters, Linda and Nancy. The original lacrosse gene came from Mary’s maternal grandmother, Lorena Cooper, who played lacrosse as a school girl. Mary still has her stick.

Prior to Mary’s love affair with lacrosse, her family were devoted fans of the Saturday night stock-car races at Merrittville Speedway. Mary could often be seen climbing in and out of the vehicles through the window, just like the racers. As she grew older, Mary’s father took her to the occasional lacrosse game at Haig Bowl, but it wasn’t until the Virgil Centennial Arena was built that Mary and her family became regular supporters of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Junior “B” Team. The Niagara Supertest Warriors were sponsored by Conradi’s Supertest Service Centre and coached by the owner, Peter Conradi Sr. Mary quickly became one of the team’s most dedicated fans. In 1973, led by legends Mike French, Norm Hope, Jojie Engemann, Willi Plett and goaltender John Skubel, the team won the Canadian Junior “B” Championship Founders Cup, a feat they also repeated in 1981, coached by Bob ‘Buff’ McCready. Mary and family members rarely missed a game during this era.

Most people know Mary Sticca as a long-serving volunteer in Zone 9, which is the Ontario Lacrosse region which forms a triangle between Burlington, Fort Erie and Simcoe, and also includes the associations in Hamilton, Lincoln, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Six Nations and St. Catharines. She has been a mainstay executive member for decades, but her community volunteerism is actually an historic family trait. Her paternal grandfather W.L. Patterson was a Reeve of Niagara Township, her maternal grandfather John Cooper was a school board trustee and her father served on the Town Council. Her mother was a renowned cherry pie baker for the Anglican Church socials and bake sales. Volunteering was in Mary’s blood. ‘Aunt’ Mary first became involved as a volunteer in minor lacrosse in Ontario while watching her nephew, Mike Dueck, who played for Niagara-on-the-Lake. A few years later, her eldest son James started playing, followed shortly by his younger brother Matthew. While her husband, Sante, worked long hours in his parent’s restaurant on Main Street in Niagara Falls, Mary drove the boys to games and tournaments throughout the province, forming friendships and learning more about lacrosse wherever she went. She was elected to the executive of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Minor Lacrosse Association before becoming a representative of Zone 9, where she continues to serve today as an executive member, tournament liaison, committee representative and referee supporter. Her unwavering support for lacrosse and its participants is inspiring to all.

Thank you for your outstanding contribution, Mary!