

Who was Phil St Luke?

Phil St Luke, also known as *Flying Phil*, was an accomplished Special Olympics athlete and huge sports fan! He was an advocate for those with developmental disabilities, that they be treated fairly and with respect. Phil was an animal lover who went out of his way to care for creatures big and small.

And most importantly and often unrecognized by many, Phil was a tireless community volunteer!

Phil was well known for being spotted while walking around the region, like a local real life "*Where's Waldo.*" People would honk and he'd lift a giant arm to wave. Very few realized he was most likely headed to the food bank to load hampers, muck stalls for the Therapeutic Riding Association, or contribute hours building infrastructure in the early days of the North Island Wildlife Recovery Centre. He participated in walk-a-thons and regularly helped at fire department food and toy drives. And pretty much anything else when asked or when he saw an opportunity to lend a hand.



With the developmental age of about nine years, Phil would sometimes startle people who weren't expecting a 6'5" man to eagerly ask if he could help push their baby stroller home or carry their groceries. A quote from Phil when interviewed by the local paper in the early 1980's, when asked what hobbies he enjoyed, his answer was "*my favorite hobby is anything that helps people*" and for forty years, he did his best to help the people of Oceanside by volunteering at local organizations.

Here are some words which have been used to describe Phil by those close to him:

- Pure of heart
- Acted as though everybody was one big family
- Just wanted to be accepted
- Fearless in his friendliness

While accepting donations for a memorial statue, we hear many stories. One was from a woman involved with the Special Olympics who recalled when Phil, after winning a race, returned to the track to encourage and walk-in the struggling last place competitor, out there alone. We have noticed those who tend to express a deep appreciation for Phil are those who may be thought of as less fortunate; however, he treated everyone like a new best friend and valued them the same.

Phil's reputation saw him asked to officially open local and provincial sports tournaments and lead community parades outside of Parksville. He gained the name, *Mr Parksville*, had his birthday declared "*Flying Phil day*" and was often featured in the news as a local character of note.

Phil passed on January 13, 2023, and while no one who lives to 70 is perfect, Phil was a man who knew the value of two thumbs up attitude and someone willing to be an encouraging friend to all. We think this is worth celebrating and remembering with a permanent memorial. We ask that you find a way to spread the word about Phil's accomplishments and the initiative to raise funds to mark his very real contribution to this region's charities and community at large.

Submitted by Jennah Stavroff, member of the Phil St Luke Standing Committee