



Patricia Maguire describing her quilt art in 2000. Rachel Rossiter and Jan McGregor in the background.

The Power of Giving Back

Story by Dr Marline Squance, Autoimmune Resource and Research Centre.

This is a short story with a long history of giving back. Giving back as an individual living with illness; as a charity association set up to provide support and help to people living with autoimmune illness; and finally as a large corporation offering service to that individual patient and the wider community, and also to the support association through its long-lasting friendship and partnership. "The power of giving back" has immense potential for good, however its power sometimes is not realised for many years.

The connections were first formed through a conversation between patients living with autoimmune illness and a Pathologist, Professor Robert Clancy, of Hunter Area Pathology Service (HAPS). The relationship grew from that point and has continued with the long-standing support of the pathology organisation now renamed Pathology North. The original relationship was financially supported by local Hunter-based Lions and Lioness groups and a support group set up by people living with the autoimmune illnesses of scleroderma and lupus, and now draws its funds from donations and fundraising. Throughout its life the Autoimmune Resource and Research Centre (ARRC) has been generously provided with "in kind" support by Pathology North through the provision of a Resource Centre room and infrastructures allowing the centre to provide education and support services to help people live an improved quality of life with autoimmune illness.

To mark the synergistic relationship and to raise awareness of the autoimmune patient's life with illness, Mrs Patricia Maguire of Dunbogan, (near Port Macquarie) gave up her time to create a quilted artwork telling the story of support through understanding and giving.

"Cold Hands, Warm Heart" was created and donated by a past president of the Scleroderma/lupus Support Group in the Hunter, Mrs Maguire. It was originally presented to Associate Professor Rachel Rossiter, the original clinical nurse consultant and counsellor of ARRC, and to representatives of HAPS in 2000. It has been proudly displayed outside ARRC for the last 16 years in the Pathology building of John Hunter Hospital. Recently, the Pathology North building has been undergoing renovations, which meant the donated quilt was taken down to protect it and to allow it to receive some much-needed care. To help preserve the quilt and sentiment captured within its stitches, ARRC and Pathology North Management decided to have it placed in a protective frame prior to its rehang in the foyer, once painting had been completed. This week saw its return and installation as a permanent artwork.

The quilt forms a strong visual depiction of the synergy and relationship ARRC, people living with autoimmune illness and pathology services in the Hunter have enjoyed for 28 years.

Patricia's inspiration for the quilt panels was drawn from many of her own experiences of living with a number of autoimmune illnesses including scleroderma and Raynaud's phenomenon, as depicted by the blue, cold hands of the central panel.

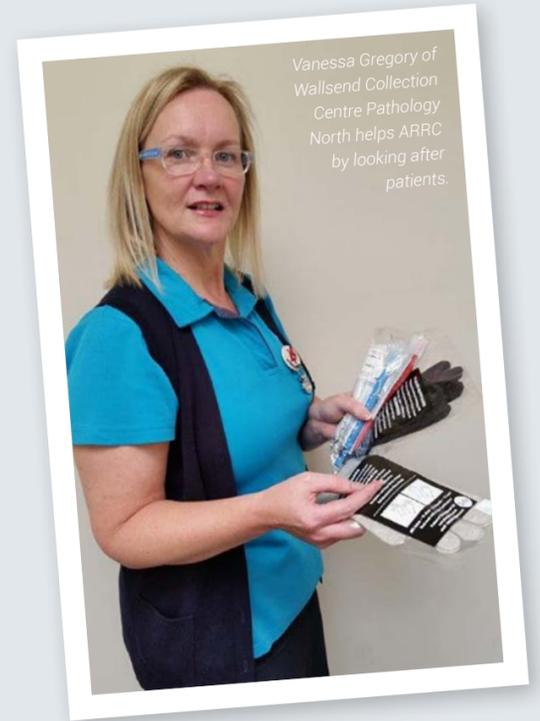
Its top panels tell a story of friendship, support and caring. The S&L logo of the support society (now within ARRC) sits proudly in the corner and is beside its members holding hands and reaching out to help each other. The beauty and power of nature are shown within floral panels of irises and sweet peas, reminding us that beauty can be found in times of sickness as well as when we are healthy. A final floral tribute sits within the bottom corner of the artwork. This tribute is of a small white and yellow alpine flower (shown much larger than in nature) growing under a rock ledge with only a thin ray of sunlight to give it energy. The flower survives in harsh conditions and became the symbol for both the struggle and survival of people living with autoimmune illness.

The dove panel represents peace, but in the quilt it represents the peace that can be found within each of us and especially those living with chronic illness, enabling them to cope more easily with day-to-day symptoms. The old saying "cold hands, warm heart" holds with great truth in those with autoimmune illness, as many seek the natural warmth of the sun to ward off symptoms and build a strong, warm heart. The red hearts are used in the artwork to symbolise health and life, which is a universal goal.

The final panel completes the imagery and represents the connectedness of the Autoimmune Centre and Pathology North. This panel also represents the creator's understanding of the importance of pathology in diagnosing and monitoring both illness and health. The flames are drawing us all in to continue to fuel the fire of patient support and research. Patricia used this panel to raise hope for improved diagnosis and management, with a vision for continuing research that may lead to a cure one day through understanding symptoms and the science of disease pathways.

Whilst many corporate and organisational partnerships are formed between charities and organisations as a result of corporate social responsibility programs, only a small few can herald such strength and lasting support. Pathology North, through its support of ARRC and its ongoing provision of valuable space and infrastructure, allows ARRC to provide a service that builds on the diagnostic and clinical care provided by Pathology North and its staff. It allows us both to positively invest in the maintenance of health of the individual and the community and importantly it allows ARRC to work with Pathology North staff to investigate diseases and disease pathways to potentially improve health outcomes.

The 'giving back' of Pathology North and its 1000-strong staff of pathologists, clinicians, medical laboratory scientists, technical and operational staff allows ARRC to better support our community members that live with debilitating chronic autoimmune illness. The power of 'giving back' is realised through the furthering of social good, and in this case goes beyond the interests of a ny individual. 🌐



Vanessa Gregory of Wallsend Collection Centre Pathology North helps ARRC by looking after patients.

The design of the Pathology North logo portrays a blood drop, symbolising pathology, and a free-scale network, representing Pathology North's vast networking capacity, capability and connectedness.

Free-scale networks are noteworthy. Many empirically observed networks appear to be free-scale, including the worldwide web, protein networks, citation networks and some social networks. Networks maintain connectedness, guaranteed by the number and strength of the hubs.

Pathology North makes a difference to people's lives by advancing patient care and providing world-class quality pathology and laboratory medicine.

