

Antoinette Charlebois was born in Midland, Ontario in 1951. Taken from her family as a baby and placed in foster care, she never knew her parents nor most of her ten siblings. She was sent to Huronia Regional Center, an institution for developmentally disabled children, at the age of five, where she and the other residents endured inhumane treatment and cruel abuse.

Antoinette witnessed other patients bound in straitjackets, administered dope needles, thrown to the floor, even raped and punished by death. She herself was injured multiple times, and never forgot the trauma inflicted upon her.

Thankfully, Antoinette was released from the institution about five years after she was admitted. She didn't let her awful experience deter her future and studied at George Brown College, pursuing her dream of becoming a hairdresser. She achieved her goal and worked with a friend in their own beauty salon, where many amusing things happened.

Though she received support from her friends in Toronto, it was still difficult for Antoinette to get over the shadow in her past. She found comfort in crocheting and sewing, as working with her hands helped her take her mind off distressing memories, and her works are real masterpieces. Using her talents, Antoinette strives to help others in the community because she knows that everyone went through their own struggles. She crocheted 31 blankets for victims of domestic abuse, and willingly teaches anyone who is interested in her craft.

A volunteer at Baycrest hospital, Antoinette makes many new friends during her time there. Some have become like family. Staff, patients and other volunteers alike adore her and her charming personality, and say that she has 'a light to her'.

Antoinette currently lives with her sister Marie Slark, whom she reconciled with after the class action lawsuit against the government for the abuse they received at Huronia Regional Center, and their two pets, a cute cat named Maggie and a delightful dog named Buster. They're very happy together, joking around and celebrating special occasions by planning each other surprises.

Antoinette believes in being kind, and it saddens her to see so much fighting and hate in the world. She would like young people to know that: "Life is too short to fight! Be kind to one another."