

Celebrating 25 Years of Conservation

Hope. In times of joy, it can seem abundant, found under the shade of a Douglas-fir, felt on the breeze through interior brushland, or blooming in the camas fields of Garry oak meadows. Even in the darkest of times, it is critical for our continued effort. While our climate continues to change in unpredictable ways, our work depends on the scientifically-grounded hope that our efforts can make a difference. At TLC we have experienced times of trial and singular successes no one thought possible. Throughout it all, there was hope.

I am pleased to share that this spring marks TLC's 25th anniversary as a charitable land trust working throughout the province. In honour of this significant milestone, TLC's Board of Directors are challenging those who value B.C.'s biological diversity to join them in contributing to a 25th Anniversary Endowment Fund in support of the stewardship of our most precious protected areas. Donors have already stepped forward to match the first \$40,000 of gifts to this fund with the hope to raise \$250,000 throughout the year.

We are also pleased to bring you news of our most recent protected area: Gospel Rock. Located in Gibsons on the Sunshine Coast, the Gospel Rock Covenant protects 6.72 hectares (16.6 acres) of rare forest and natural waterfront.

This project has been a truly collaborative effort that has brought together a community of individuals and organizations, all with the hope to protect this unique site. As you can see from this photo, the area is breathtaking.

In addition to our 25th anniversary and the Gospel Rock Covenant, in this edition of the LANDmark you will read more about current projects at Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area and Abkhazi Garden, the impacts of our winter storms, and ways for you to participate in protecting biodiversity including our 2022 Passport to Nature and Activity Book for Kids. Despite another season with COVID-19 impacts, our team has developed a variety of opportunities for all ages and skill levels to get involved with TLC.

From volunteering in the field to exploring nature virtually, there are opportunities for all to join us in conservation. My hope is that our work will inspire you to make an impact, create refugia, and connect with other nature enthusiasts in protecting B.C.'s beautiful biodiversity.



Cathy Armstrong
Executive Director

TLC's 2022 Passport to Nature is Now Available

By Dianna Stenberg
Deputy Executive Director

TLC's 2022 Passport to Nature, designed to connect TLC supporters and the public with nature, is now available for event registration. With opportunities to get your hands dirty while restoring an impacted ecosystem and chances to learn more about TLC's protected areas, this year's program will delight those near and far with a variety of accessibility levels.

The last two years of TLC's Passport to Nature program have required significant pivoting. Given the uncertainty associated with COVID-19, our 2020 programming was dramatically impacted. Thankfully last year, the fourth year of our Passport to Nature Program, we were able to share 11 events with more than 200 registered participants, and a worldwide reach as events were accessible to all with an internet connection. Further, because of the virtual nature of the program, the impact of this naturalist content continues to grow: many of our virtual events were recorded and can be enjoyed for years to come!

Today, our team is eager to connect with nature enthusiasts out in the field! TLC's 2022 Passport to Nature features hands-on naturalist activities in addition to recorded webinars for those looking to learn and try their hand at skills in their own time. We are launching our program with an in-person **Bird Walk (March 19)** with ornithology expert Ian Cruickshank. If you're looking to get into the field with us, you may be interested in our other in-person events including **Restoration at Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve (June 11)**, our **Nature Journaling (April 23, May 28, June 25, and July 23)** 4-part series at TLC's Millstream Creek Watershed property, and the **Abkhazi Garden Open House (September 11)**. Back by popular demand after his presentations in the 2021 Passport, Paul Grieve will return with an **Invasive Plant Identification and Management Strategies Session (April 3)** full of tips and tricks for your backyard.

For those looking to join us virtually, you can register for a variety of naturalist-

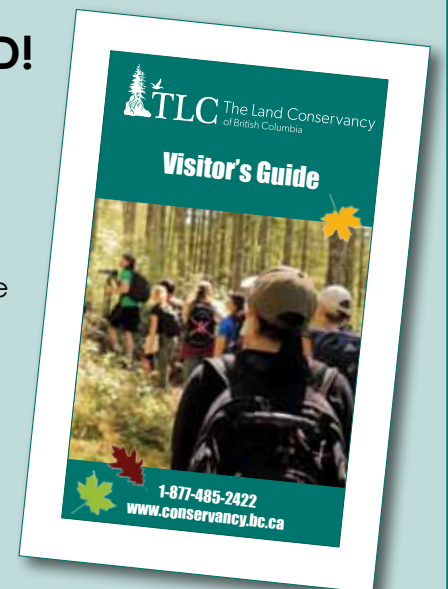
themed recorded webinars. Donor Relations Manager Lisa Cross will host our **Medicinal Plant Workshop (July 7)** featuring the medicinal properties of plants. **Sustaining Soil (October 27)** will share the importance soil plays in providing plants with necessary nutrients and tips to create ideal growing conditions. For those looking for more information about sites to access on your own time, the virtual **TLC's Visitors Guide (November 17)** will discuss how you can visit some of TLC's publicly accessible covenants and properties.

As in previous years, our events are free to register with the exception of our in-person **Wreath Making events at Abkhazi Garden (December 1, 2, and 4)** which require a \$60 fee to cover the cost of participant's wreath-making materials. You can register for Passport to Nature events online at www.conservancy.bc.ca/passport or with staff assistance over the phone at calling 1-877-485-2422. We hope to catch up with you at one of our Passport events soon! ■

JOIN US ONLINE OR IN THE FIELD!

TLC's spring 2022 programming includes our Deertrails Naturalist Program from April 26 to May 2 at the Clearwater Wetland & Wildlife Corridor; our Passport to Nature featuring in-person and virtual events; and annual covenant monitoring and restoration. If you're interested in getting more involved, consider volunteering or check out one of our many publicly accessible protected areas featured in our Visitor's Guide.

Visit www.conservancy.bc.ca anytime to register for Passport to Nature events, find other naturalist resources, or learn about how you can get more involved!



Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area Update

By Karen Iwachow
Environmental Technician & Land Manager

The enthusiasm for the beautiful grass and brushlands of Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area continues to grow as biologists and local conservation partners are seeing the recovery from the impacts created by recreational ATV use since the closure to motor vehicles. This rehabilitation has inspired many opportunities to enhance this important wildlife refuge with partner projects from government, Indigenous communities, and other conservation minded groups.

Fort Shepherd is a 964 hectare (2,200 acre) conservation area on the traditional territories of the Sinixt Peoples known today as Trail, B.C. Stretching 8.5km along the west side of the Columbia River, Fort Shepherd is a unique and interesting ecological and cultural area, and home to an incredible array of wildlife including nearly 30 species at risk.

Last June I hosted a day of planting at Fort Shepherd Conservancy Area. I was met with an enthusiastic group of local community members from Kootenay Native Plant Society (KNPS), Trail Wildlife Association, TLC's volunteer stewards Al Mallette and Karen Trebitz, and the Rotary eClub of Waneta Sunshine who graciously provided funds for the project through an Express Grant. Together, we planted over 50 shrubs to enhance the brushland habitats of the lower benches near the river including Chokecherry, Saskatoon, and Nootka Rose: all "pollinator superfoods" that support a wide variety of pollinating insects including bumblebees, beetles, and butterflies.

The planting with the Rotary eClub contributed to the larger project led by

our partners in conservation, KNPS, who are running a Columbia Basin Trust funded program called Pollination Pathway Climate Adaptation Initiative which includes Fort Shepherd as one of its sites. Last season the Pollination Pathway expanded the experimental plots previously started on a section of decommissioned access road with locally grown or collected seeds to improve pollinator opportunities.

Fort Shepherd has a beautiful yet small population of camas (*Camassia quamash*), a blue flower in the lily family with important cultural values. More commonly found on B.C.'s south coast, camas has been found in a small yet dense population on low-elevation sites in the west Kootenays. Like many rare plants, it struggles to thrive due to habitat loss. Last summer the Pollination Pathway project planted hundreds of bulbs and seeds on an experimental site on the shores of Fort Shepherd to learn more about how to best transplant them and improve population numbers.

As the summers at Fort Shepherd are becoming increasingly hotter and dryer as our climate changes, establishing young plants is challenging. Thankfully, volunteer stewards have been an invaluable support to our restoration activities. Among many tasks, they help to keep these plantings alive by diligently watering throughout the summer and last year's heat dome resulting in a successful rate of survival! On behalf of TLC, thank you! ■



Common camas (*Camassia quamash*), a favourite of pollinators. Photo credit Karen Iwachow.



Rare Forest Protected on the Sunshine Coast with New Conservation Covenant

Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA), The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC), Greenlane Homes, and the Town of Gibsons are pleased to announce the registration of a conservation covenant protecting 6.72 hectares (16.6 acres) of one of the most spectacularly beautiful and ecologically sensitive places on the Sunshine Coast: Gospel Rock. Overlooking Atl'ka7tsem Howe Sound and the Salish Sea at the southwestern edge of the Town of Gibsons, the scenic bluff of Gospel Rock is home to the last stretch of natural waterfront in the municipality. Located within the unceded territory of the Sk̓w̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw, Gospel Rock is found within the Coastal Western Hemlock Biogeoclimatic Zone (CWHxm), one of the most highly disturbed groups of ecosystems in British Columbia.

The conservation covenant, a legal agreement registered on title, restricts

activities which would compromise ecosystem integrity or displace its species. Primarily composed of mature dryland forest, the covenant protects six ecological communities including the provincially red-listed Douglas-fir – Western Hemlock/ Salal Dry Maritime (CWHxm1-03). This complex of ecosystems provides habitat for a rich diversity of flora and fauna species.

Protecting Gospel Rock with this conservation covenant is the culmination of over 35 years of conservation efforts to protect this regional ecological legacy. Community advocacy, spearheaded by the Friends of Gospel Rock Society, created a strong foundation for the covenant partners and property owners Greenlane Homes to collaborate on developing a conservation covenant that will provide protection for these rare ecosystems in perpetuity.

“Walking this property and standing

to observe the sweeping vistas was a privilege,” said Cathy Armstrong, TLC Executive Director. “Working together to realize the conservation goals has ensured a legacy that we can all be very proud of.”

“The SCCA is pleased and relieved to participate at long last in the conservation of most of the rare ecosystems of the Gospel Rock waterfront and hillside. We are grateful for the community activism that persevered and the coming together of all the partners to create a permanent solution to the survival of this special place!” said Lee Ann Johnson, Chair, The SCCA. “Our hope is that the fawn lilies, pink sea blush, alligator lizards, the forest trees and the underground mycelium connecting it all will continue to thrive and be cherished by our community.”

“I am absolutely delighted to see that decades of advocacy and public engagement has resulted in a conservation covenant

for Gospel Rock forests and waterfront,” said Daniel Bouman, Chair, the Friends of Gospel Rock Society. “This is the highest level of ecological protection available for private land in BC. Congratulations to the owners and covenant partners.”

“Council acknowledges that the Gospel Rock conservation covenant is the result of many years of work undertaken by community volunteers, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association, The Land Conservancy of BC, owners of the land, successive councils and employees of the Town of Gibsons,” said Mayor Bill Beamish. “This covenant is an achievement that we can all celebrate as a milestone and an example of responsible development and environmental conservation for our community. I hope this is just the beginning.”

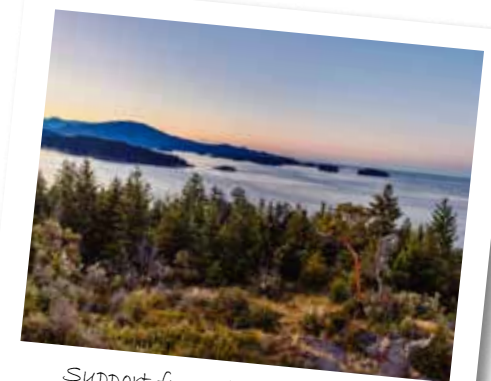
“Greenlane Homes is very pleased with the process and result of collaborating

with TLC, Friends of Gospel Rock, SCCA, and the Town of Gibsons to ensure the long term protection of this very special ecosystem on the Gospel Rock lands. We look forward to continuing to work with these groups and other organizations in the ongoing protection of this land, and also the development of the neighbouring Touchstone at Gospel Rock community.”

Larissa Bron is TLC's Covenant Coordinator currently responsible for the Gospel Rock Covenant. Larissa has been stewarding the project since joining TLC in 2021 for Torrey Archer's maternity leave.



If you have questions about Gospel Rock please connect with Larissa at 250-479-8053 or lbron@conservancy.bc.ca. ■



Support from the conservation community has helped protect this mature forest overlooking the Salish Sea.
Photo credit Greenlane Homes



The rock outcrops of Gospel Rock are home to dense patches of Seablush (Plectritis congesta) - a pollinator favourite!
Photo credit TLC files

Behind: Earsman Creek and Mary Lake expanded their historic banks during B.C.'s atmospheric river weather event in November 2021. Photo credit Greater Victoria Greenbelt Society. Insert: Abkhazi Garden flooding. Photo credit Cherie Millimore.



Atmospheric River Impacts TLC Sites

By Dianna Stenberg
Deputy Executive Director

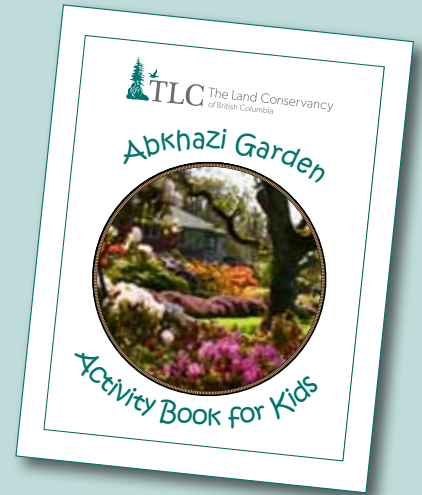
November's extreme rainfall led to dramatic events throughout the province, and the sites under TLC's care were not exceptions. The atmospheric river created the wettest November 15 across most of Greater Victoria, with some municipalities experiencing 80mm of rain over that 24-hour period. At Abkhazi Garden, the south lawn was like a lake; water rushed past the Summerhouse; and the pathway by the Spanish fir was several inches deep on its way to a drain. Thankfully, Abkhazi Garden's Head Gardener Jacqui Paulson and garden volunteers made sure that the three garden drains were unplugged to allow rainwater to flow out unobstructed and continued to monitor them as the weather systems continued.

Unfortunately, all our sites were not as fortunate. At TLC's 27-acre Millstream Creek Watershed property in the Highlands, Earsman Creek expanded beyond its historical banks and overwhelmed two previously installed culverts causing dramatic erosional impacts to the adjacent area including a footpath. Shifting boulders and organic material impaired the culverts

and destabilized the path, requiring TLC to address the damage caused and reassess the creek bed to support the stream system's long-term health.

In February 2021, in partnership with Goldstream Hatchery, Peninsula Streams Society, Tsartlip First Nation, and Greater Victoria Greenbelt Society, we released 2,500 pre-smolt coho salmon into the watershed to encourage the salmon to imprint the area before they make their way to the ocean. While we anticipate their return by the fall of this year, their success will depend on their outmigration, ocean survival, and return migration through impacted areas.

The sensitivity of the riparian area will play a pivotal role in the repair and restoration of the damage in the coming months. This work will include the necessary design, permitting, and notification process with the Province, in addition to expert analysis to support the riparian's health in the face of increasing weather events. To support the creek's restoration, we have applied for a Provincial community recovery grant. ■



NATURALIST ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES!



This newest edition of TLC's Activity Book, the Abkhazi Garden edition features maps, activities, and games for those looking to learn more about Abkhazi Garden.

Receive your digital copy of the Abkhazi Garden Activity Book for Kids by visiting www.conservancy.bc.ca or request a hard copy by contacting TLC at 1-877-485-2422, membership@conservancy.bc.ca or in person at the Abkhazi Garden gate kiosk.

Abkhazi Garden is located at 1964 Fairfield Road in Victoria. From April 1 to September 30, Abkhazi Garden is open 7 days per week from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Deepening Cultural Experiences at Abkhazi Garden

By Cherie Miltimore
Abkhazi Garden Site Manager

As 2022 has been proclaimed the Year of the Garden, it seems fitting that we acknowledge our community of partners, donors, and award-winning volunteers that make Abkhazi Garden an international heritage treasure.

The Ambassador of Georgia to Canada, Konstantin Kavtaradze, recognized our volunteers who won the Heritage BC Award for Outstanding Distinguished Service in 2021. The Ambassador personally thanked volunteer gate greeters, gardeners, and docents for their unique contributions to the Garden.

The Ambassador also presented the Ambassador's Award of Excellence to TLC to recognize the organization for its contributions to the closer cultural, educational, and people-to-people relations between Canada and Georgia. With funds donated from the Ambassador, we are creating a Georgian Garden section in Abkhazi Garden that honours Prince Nicolas Abkhazi's Georgian heritage.

Last year, thanks to donations, admissions, and funds raised through plant sales, art sales, and yoga classes, we refinished floors in the teahouse, painted buildings, added a greenhouse, and replaced our east fence.

In the Year of the Garden, TLC is seeking to rezone Abkhazi Garden to mixed-use zoning in order to allow current activities including volunteer gardening and public access. Further, we will be seeking the addition of a heritage designation on the site to further celebrate and protect the Abkhazi legacy.

The rezoning process will see the transfer of the townhouse densities currently zoned on the Garden to a project down the road at 1733 Fairfield Road. You can learn more about the project at aryze.ca/1733fairfield.

We also have two exciting educational projects coming up this year. Geoff Bird, professor at Royal Roads University and the director for the War Heritage

Research Initiative, will be producing a documentary on Abkhazi Garden. This documentary, complete with an interview with the ambassador and drone photography, will focus on the beautiful Garden the Abkhazis created after the Second World War.

We are also excited to announce our latest Activity Book for Kids all about Abkhazi Garden. You can request a copy by contacting TLC, downloading from our website www.conservancy.bc.ca, or visiting the Garden. While visiting Abkhazi Garden, kids can enjoy the activities in the book and learn about its Indigenous roots, the heritage of Prince and Princess Abkhazi, plants and wildlife in the garden, and mulch more!



Abkhazi Garden remains a hub of activity with many events coming up this season. I hope to see you in the Garden soon! ■

Upcoming Garden Events:

■ Spring/Summer Season Opening

Abkhazi Garden is open 7 days/week from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Friday, April 1, with a last entrance at 4:30 p.m.

■ Painting in the Garden

From May through September, local artists will participate in the plein air Artists in the Garden program.

■ Costume Museum at Government House featuring Abkhazi Collection

The Costume Museum will be open May 24 to September 2, Tuesday to Friday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The special collection includes a Georgian uniform

on loan from the Embassy of Georgian and Princess Peggy's cocktail dresses.

■ Spring Plant Sale

Abkhazi Garden Plant Sale will be held Saturday, April 23, and Sunday, April 24, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Looking for interesting plants for your garden? Lost some plants over the winter? Come to buy plants and stay for a wander to explore the plants in our Garden.

■ Art Show Fundraiser

Join us for an outdoor art show featuring local artists on Monday, September 5. Art can be enjoyed while visiting the Teahouse from Tuesday, September 6,

to Sunday, October 10, with a public art show on Monday, October 11.

■ Grandparents Day & Fall Plant Sale

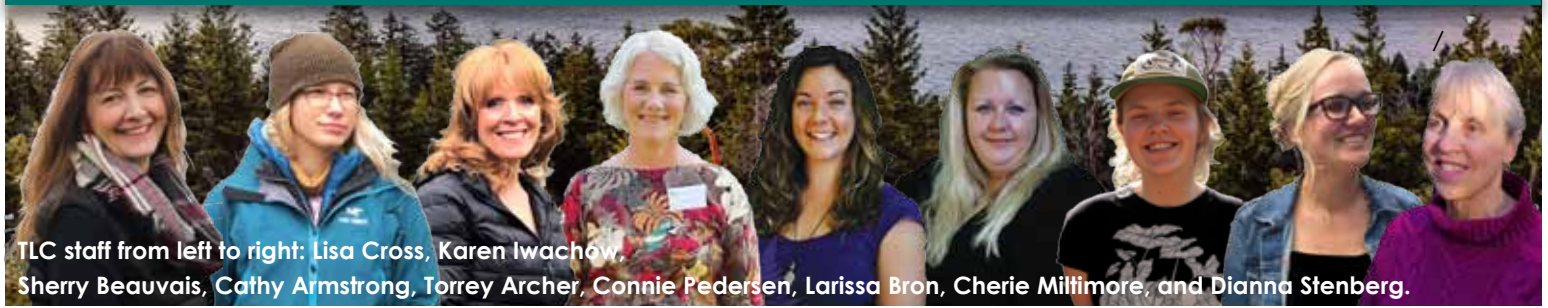
Join volunteers on Sunday, September 11 for free tours, giveaways, and prizes. Free admission.

■ Remembrance Day

Enjoy a peaceful tour of the Garden on Friday, November 11. Admission by donation. Request a tour at the gate.

■ Festive Season Fundraiser

Seasonal wreaths, swag, and table toppers created by Abkhazi gardeners are for sale Saturday, November 25 to Thursday, December 24, at the gate.



TLC staff from left to right: Lisa Cross, Karen Iwachow, Sherry Beauvais, Cathy Armstrong, Torrey Archer, Connie Pedersen, Larissa Bron, Cherie Millimore, and Dianna Stenberg.

Celebrating 25 Years of Conservation

By Dianna Stenberg
Deputy Executive Director

This spring TLC is celebrating its 25th year of protecting critical ecosystems and vital habitats throughout B.C. Today the organization protects 250 conservation covenants covering a combined 12,868 acres, and a further 2,784 acres of habitat where we manage and hold title. What an accumulation of efforts and achievements!

In my time with the organization, I have witnessed expansion and restructuring, struggles and brilliant successes. I've often wondered at the truly astonishing accomplishments individuals can achieve when they come together with a shared purpose. Feats like partnering with the WSANEC Leadership Council on the historic SISCENEM, the acquisition of 140 acres of contiguous wetlands and wildlife corridors in the Clearwater River Valley, or the continual, year-round stewardship of the publicly accessible Abkhazi Garden are only made possible by the support of thousands behind us.

Our recently registered conservation

covenant on Gospel Rock is no exception; the covenant creation process included input from a variety of community groups, local government, and conservation organizations. By joining together, we create a strong, more resilient team and encourage a more diverse outlook on the impacts and importance of conserving such important ecosystems.

While many of our protected sites have communities behind them to support their ongoing stewardship, not all sites are so fortunate. These sites require greater resources from organizations like TLC to encourage ecosystem health in the face of ongoing external threats including climate change. To ensure that sites protected over the last 25 years without support for ongoing stewardship receive the necessary resources they require to maintain their ecological value, TLC's Board of Directors are launching a challenge to British Columbians to raise \$250,000.

"To celebrate TLC's 25th anniversary of conservation, the Board of Directors and I are challenging those who respect and appreciate the more than 250 ecosystems and habitats that TLC protects to support our land trust by making a gift this year toward their continued protection," said Jeff Sheldrake, Chair of TLC's Board of Directors. "Donors, including members of our Board, are kicking off the fundraising campaign by matching the first \$40,000 of

contributions dollar-for-dollar."

Funds raised toward the 25th anniversary matching opportunity will create a new endowment fund for the ongoing stewardship of our most sensitive ecosystems and habitats. The endowment fund will be held by the Victoria Foundation to provide long-term, sustainable support.

"With a focus on sustainable methods of protecting B.C.'s biological diversity, TLC protects new projects in partnership with other organizations and with ongoing fiscal responsibility in mind," said Cathy Armstrong, TLC Executive Director. "Our 25th anniversary of conservation is a wonderful opportunity for TLC supporters to have their dollars doubled while ensuring our most precious sites remain protected in perpetuity."

I look forward to witnessing the next chapter in TLC's history and doing my part to see our many conservation projects underway coming to fruition. If you are interested in joining the Board's challenge in honour of TLC's 25 years of conservation, please consider giving to the 25th Anniversary Endowment Fund today! ■



TLC Board of Directors

Paleah Black Moher ■ Kelly Fretwell ■ Mel Lehan
Lori Roter ■ Jeff Sheldrake ■ Fran Sloan Sainas
Andrew Stewart ■ Tom Watson ■ Sara Wickham

TLC is honoured to be the recipient of donations in the memory of:

Maryone Beisiegel, Carlo Bezio, Colleen Coppin, Bob Drew-Brook, Robin W. Edwards, Lola Knight, Philip Manders, Caroline Miller, Jody Slakov, Marie Waddell, Derek Robert Wilkinson, and Frank Williscroft

To remember your loved one with a special gift call 1-877-485-2422