

The Oakville Beaver

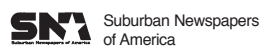
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Guest Column

Catholic Education Week



Alice Anne LeMay

Alice Anne LeMay, Chair of the Halton Catholic District School Board

This is a special week in Ontario as schools throughout the province will be highlighting and celebrating “education” in the community. On Sunday, the Halton Catholic District School Board (HCDSB), along with Catholic school boards and their communities across Ontario, launched Catholic Education Week, which runs through to tomorrow.

Catholic Education Week (May 6-11) is an opportunity to invite families, friends, neighbours, local businesses, organizations and other members of our community to take note of the distinctive contribution that Catholic education makes to our lives and to the broader community. The theme for this year’s province-wide celebration is ‘Walking in the Light of Christ’.

Step into any one of our 41 elementary schools, eight secondary schools and three continuing education facilities and you will gain a deeper understanding of this theme and its relevance in Catholic schools. Our curriculum is rooted in the Gospel teachings of Jesus Christ. We successfully deliver the Ministry of Education’s curriculum, while at the same time integrating into that curriculum our liturgical traditions and the Gospel perspective that permeates all we do in Catholic schools.

While this insight into Catholic education may be new for some Ontarians reading this, Catholic education has been an integral part of Ontario’s history for more than 170 years. As a vital component of the province’s publicly-funded education system, Catholic schools educate almost 600,000 students each year. Over one million Ontarians choose publicly-funded Catholic schools for the education of their children.

Our Catholic schools have and continue to uphold a strong tradition of excellence that is rooted in achievement, faith and service. We are a learning community that nurtures welcoming and compassionate educational environments that respect the uniqueness and dignity of all people.

During Catholic Education Week, our schools are celebrating local achievements and will continue to Walk in the Light of Christ with countless activities planned across the system. Our third annual Walk With Jesus event is taking place today (May 10). This walk brings together students, parents and staff from each school to walk together, as they exhibit a sense of community, social justice and solidarity. Our Student Awards of Excellence ceremony recently took place to honour and celebrate the students in our system who have demonstrated excellence and commitment in their actions, and the ceremony served as the kickoff to our Catholic Education Week celebrations.

I invite the members of our community to join us during Catholic Education Week as we celebrate the Light of Christ that is in each of us. During this week, please take a moment to visit our Board (www.hcdsb.org) and school websites, to read more about the many activities taking place in Catholic schools in Oakville and throughout HCDSB.

Although Catholic Education Week will conclude Friday, Catholic education is something we proudly celebrate every day of the year.

Alice Anne LeMay is an Oakville Trustee and the Chair of the Halton Catholic District School Board.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

BEING OPTIMISTIC: At the end of March, 13 participants from Oakville schools (Grades 6-12) took part in the annual Optimist Oratorical Contest, under the topic of “How my Optimism Helps me Overcome Obstacles.” First place winner was Dasha Metropolitansky (\$500), Mohamed Sarraj took second (\$350) and third went to Taha Ahmed (\$100). Back row, from left, Optimist Peter MacLean, Amir, William, Andrew, Ian, Mohamed, Taha. Front row, from left, Surina, Dennis, Brandon, Jamie, Mark, Shalini, Dasha.

The ‘drive’ and sacrifice to see our kids succeed in life

Sunday morning, and here’s how it went down. Summoned by my bedside alarm at an ungodly hour, I reluctantly rose, staggered to the kitchen, brewed a quick coffee (my salvation, my only hope), then entered the frosty outdoors.

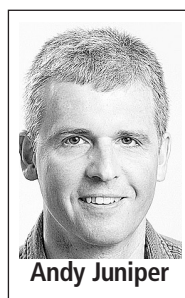
While the calendar said it was the end of April, the thermometer swore it was -5 C.

Regardless, I was doing my duty as a dad and driving my offspring to her new place of employment — and it was, as Yogi Berra once said, “Déjà vu all over again.”

In case you missed my last column, I wrote about how my daughter was making her maiden voyage into the iceberg-infested waters of the labour pool; she’d landed summer work and her employers wanted her to work weekends until school ends, at which time she’ll labour full-time.

Naturally, I was crossing my fingers that the experience would be positive and that she’d navigate the waters of that maiden voyage a little better than, say, the Titanic.

The column struck a chord. Possibly because it was brilliantly written — but more likely because “first job/summer job” is a topic to which most people can relate, and that apparently sparks a myriad of memories.



Andy Juniper

Readers told me about whacky first-job experiences, all the while reinforcing the more poignant points of my missive: that the grunt jobs we land as youths are character-building experiences we never forget, and that teach us vital life lessons — namely, stay in school, work hard, and get ahead in life, or you may well find yourself doing your summer job, forever.

Her first day went swimmingly. As I drove her there, I searched for signs of anxiousness (she’s a Juniper; we’re oddly wired). She seemed fine. And when I picked her up, I was thrilled to discover that she’d had a great day. She was abuzz: she liked the people, she liked the job — oh, and she’d volunteered to start early every shift from thereon in. Wait, hold up. Early? Yep, 6 a.m. Apparently she liked the idea of getting started early, so she could finish early.

And so I find myself fated with rising at 5:20 every weekend morning — and five mornings a week during the summer — to chauffeur our daughter. Well, that’s... wonderful.

It’s not like I would have ever wanted to sinfully stay in bed until,

say, 6 a.m. And it’s not like I’ve never been in this position before. One summer our eldest snagged work at a golf course that was a 40-minute drive away. Not only was round-tripping him to/from work costing me about 2.5-hours a day, it was costing me untold shuteye, and sanity.

Some mornings they wanted him in at six, some at five, once or twice at 4:30 a.m. Those were the mornings I considered running over myself, just to end the agony.

Not to be outdone, our middle son got a job that had him working late at night, often followed by an early morning shift. Ah, good times. Sleep is so overrated. Besides, what would I have possibly done with all those hours I spent chauffeuring kids to work? Oh, right. I would have done my own work.

At some point during the upcoming months, I imagine I will be giving our daughter a little lecture about things like staying in school, working hard, and getting ahead in life, so she doesn’t find herself doing her summer job, forever. And so that I don’t find myself, in my dotage, still driving her back and forth and back and....

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