



HENRY BURY
Intelligencer

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Amidst the hustle and bustle of a busy high school, Donna Hawkes often found solace in her favourite place.

It was the chapel at St. Theresa Catholic Secondary School.

"I would come here to reflect and pray and find peace as required because I have a very strong faith and a strong passion for Catholic education," she said.

Hawkes spent the last two of her 32 years in education at St. Theresa near the Quinte Sports Centre. In that time, she made numerous trips to the chapel situated in the heart of the six-year-old school by the "great hall."

The chapel, she said, serves as a constant reminder why St. Theresa exists as a school.

"It's our compass, our true north," Hawkes said.

"Because of that, I don't think I could have been anything else but a Catholic educator. For me, it was more than a career. It was a vocation."

The vice-principal retired the end of June from the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School board.

She chose to leave a few months early so that she can be with her husband, Chris, who also retired last month from Quinte Secondary School.

"As a Catholic leader, I felt we had another dimension to offer students and that was the spiritual dimension," said the 52-year-old hamlet of Wallbridge resident.

"During my journey as an educator, I walked with my students, my colleagues and staff on the journey of faith to God through Jesus."

That journey began at a relatively young age and took her into various roles at several different schools.

The Penetanguishine native attended a francophone school — she is bilingual — and then teacher's college in Toronto.

Hawkes was 21 years old and already married for two years when she started teaching officially in 1973 in Toronto. She had supply taught in a francophone school in Simcoe County for the year previous.

A year later, the couple arrived in the Quinte area. She has enjoyed a "very flavourable" career here the past 30 years, also earning her Bachelor of Arts degree from Queen's University and her Master of Education degree in 1996 from the University of Toronto.

"My husband's career has been in two high schools, Bayside and Quinte and very happily so. I like change and I like to have the learning curve really high," she said.