

McCue, Peter

□ EDUCATION

Peter's teacher of the year

Bayside's McCue is honoured by peers in OSSTF award

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Peter McCue received high enough marks from peers and students to be recognized as teacher of the year — but he wryly jests he cheated to earn the honour.

"Obviously, the bribes I spread around did the trick," McCue joked Tuesday at Bayside Secondary School, where he teaches social sciences — history, law and sociology.

The wit is apparent throughout a brief interview, and indeed, the characteristic is cited as a major reason why McCue was selected as top teacher by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Region 29. That covers all of Hastings and Prince Edward counties and there were seven nominees.

That sense of humour kept teachers' spirits up during a tour of duty on the picket lines a few years ago. McCue said humour is his ace-in-the-hole.

"I think it is a crucial skill...to

flat out cope with life. By poking fun at things it causes us to think in a more constructive way. It reveals the human side of us."

In a more serious vein, McCue is asked what makes the 'perfect' teacher.

"It's kind of cliched, but someone who cares. That's the same thing that makes a good anything."

The record says McCue cares, according to a summation of him by staff and students who supported his nomination.

He's been deeply involved in developing the new Grade 10 curriculum. In 1997, he organized the airlift of school supplies to Grenada. He remains one of the few teachers to still accept student teachers. He has served as the senior girls' volleyball coach, convener of minor soccer and collected for the Gleaners Food Bank...the list goes on.

McCue also said it is important for a teacher not to look down at his young charges.

"I'm teaching people rather than students. Most of the teachers care about what they do. We try to teach in a way that you hope your kids are taught." He's got three young ones.

After graduating from Queen's, he began a teaching stint with natives at a reserve in Manitoba, then a mining town in that province.

After four years, he was off to Malawi, Africa, fulfilling a lifetime dream. After two years he returned to Canada, to Moira Secondary School and eventually landed in Bayside. Over the years, the profession has changed, he says.

"It's much harder to teach now," McCue concedes, if only because of the flux of change and the fact that "expectations have been ratched up."

But the students of today are every bit as good as those who came before, despite what you may have read in newspapers, he insists.

"The majority of the kids will be solid citizens. They are going to help this country. I'm very optimistic."

He is asked what is next, after capturing the coveted teacher of the year title?

"It's all downhill from here."



Peter McCue

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