

## Area News

## Renowned children's author addresses literacy workshop

by Rick Fralick  
staff writer

The joy of reading has been a constant in Janet Lunn's life for as long as she can remember.

"I've always been a reader — even before I could read, my older sister used to read to me," the award-winning children's author told a group of about 35 parents attending the first-ever literacy workshop Feb. 12 at Pinecrest Memorial School in Bloomfield.

"I never got over the joy of learning to read," she added. "The thought that I could lift those black letters off the page and make them into something filled me with wonder."

Unlike television, Lunn theorizes that reading a story forces

children to use their imaginations, by leading them to envision plot lines beyond what the author has written on the page.

"People get stories from TV, but they don't get to add their own ideas and vision."

"Everyone who reads, learns how to use their imagination," she said, adding that any writer works in co-operation with the reader, in that, anyone who reads a book will have their own version of the story, as distinct from other readers of the same story.

Lunn cautions parents that it is up to them provide rich literature and foster a love of reading in their children.

"TV is so seductive, it's a great babysitter, but think about language such as one finds in the

Bible. Where will our children get this language if we don't give them the books?" Lunn asked.

"But don't fall into the Hardy Boys trap," she entreated. "YOU pick something wonderful — something they'll remember all their lives, and your children will have a sense of language they would not otherwise have had."

Lunn recalled that reading to each other was a popular pastime within her family, especially when her five children were young. When her husband was dying six or seven years ago, they maintained the tradition of reading to each other right up to the time of his death.

"It's not a bad way to end your life; it's not a bad way to spend your life," she said of the enriching

power of the written word.

Janet Lunn was born in Dallas, Texas and came to Canada at the age of 17 to study at Queen's University in Kingston. While there, she met and eventually married Richard Lunn and never did return to the United States to live. Since 1968 she has lived in an old farm house on Pleasant Bay in Hillier Township.

Earlier, Pinecrest principal Dave MacKay referred to Lunn as one of the natural resources of Prince Edward County, especially where the promotion of reading with children is involved.

Of the Parents as Partners — Encouraging Literacy Development at Home project, MacKay describes it as an extension of what is being accomplished in the schools' peer tutoring programs, where older students help younger students improve their literacy skills.

Peer tutoring co-ordinator

Rhonda Martinussen now has all of the schools in the Prince Edward public system on-line with peer tutoring after developing and implementing pilot projects last year at Pinecrest and North Marysburgh schools.

"The parents have been so pleased with peer tutoring that the Parents' Advisory Council at Pinecrest asked me to put on something for the whole county," MacKay said, adding that the workshop was sponsored by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation and the Parents' Advisory Councils of both Pinecrest and Kente schools.

"I liked the idea because it's a nice partnership between the parents and the teachers," he said.

This is the first time Pinecrest has tried a project of this nature and based on response from participants, MacKay says he will hold another next year.

Attendees could choose two of four workshops to attend on Saturday morning:

The aforementioned Rhonda Martinussen spoke on the subject of one-to-one tutoring strategies for overcoming reading difficulties.

Marg Goode of CML Snider School in Wellington gave a presentation on helping parents work with children to develop good spelling and writing skills.

Sophiasburgh teacher Marlene Watson shared her Reading Readiness Workshop, entitled Hush!, that answers the question: What are some of the important ingredients of becoming a reader?

And Nancy Jackson of Queen Elizabeth School in Picton dealt with strategies to motivate student reading and improve reading ability through library resources.

MacKay says an advantage of the literacy project is that it gives parents some practical hints they can take home and use right away.