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NEWS

COURSE A REAL CONFIDENCE BOOSTER: MOM

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has been teaching at schools throughout Halton and surrounding areas for 20 years. This year — like so many others — she's had to pivot to an online business model.

Teaching online, using Zoom, McEwen covers a lot of ground, including topics such as: what's in a first aid kit, calling emergency medical services, identifying poisons and dangers, how to handle wounds, nose bleeds, burns and choking. The course normally features five one-hour sessions.

"The virtual delivery was a pilot project, and at first I was like, 'Are you kidding me?' when Red Cross approached me to do it. I mastered Zoom thanks to my daughter, who helped me," McEwen says. "First aid was awkward to do online without the real-life demonstration, but the videos helped us get through it."

Jordin Filian, 11, has taken both the home alone class and the babysitting course with McEwen. Mom Claudia Filian said, "Jordin really enjoyed it! She is now even more confident in her decisions and looks forward to caring for her seven-year-old brother from time to time. She loved to participate and became one of the leaders in the break-out rooms. This course has positively impacted her and has really helped with her anxiety. It was a great experience."

Ruth Gardner's daughter took the babysitting course online this summer too.

"I registered my daughter as I wanted her to be prepared and feeling comfortable if she was to look after other children,

"If I even get through to one child, that makes it all worthwhile."

- Catherine McEwen

but also keep her safe in the home," she said about the summer session her daughter attended.

"She didn't think it made a difference being on Zoom since by July she was very familiar with online activities given Google classroom for school Catherine did a great job keeping the kids on their toes and engaged."

For her part, McEwen says, "If I even get through to one child, that makes it all worthwhile."

"Staying at home is a privilege for parents and kids as long as both parties are listening to each other. Parents get to save money on child care and the child learns about independence. But it's unfair to have a child stay home alone before teaching them the basics like what to do if the carbon monoxide detector starts beeping," McEwen, who is offering online sessions through the fall and winter, says.

The Canada Safety Council recommends that parents not leave children alone before age 10 — and even then, only if the child is mature enough, and there is a responsible adult nearby, such as a neighbour, to help if needed. Its website offers a list of home alone program providers focusing on how to prevent problems and handle real-life situations.

To learn more about Kids Safety First visit @KSFmcewen or its website: <https://mcewenfamily.wixsite.com/kids-safetyfirst-1/programs>.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With thousands of Halton-area parents facing the suddenly heightened challenges associated with work and their children's new education scenario, we explored one local woman's efforts to give youth the tools necessary to be safe at home alone.

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